ALBERTA ASSOCIATION ON GERONTOLOGY

# Futures Policy Forum

*Transforming Healthy Aging and Quality of Life for Older Albertans*

# IMPROVING THE WORK ENVIRONMENT FOR SENIORS' SERVICES WORKERS

*A FREE Zoom Webinar, Wednesday, June 15th, 2022*

*12:00 PM - 1:30 PM*

**Summary Report for Stakeholder Collaborative Committee, Sept 12th, 2022: Webinar Overview, Reach, Participant Experience, What Matters to Participants, Summary Observations**

## 1.0 WEBINAR 3 OVERVIEW

### 1.1 Objectives

- To make the public aware of workforce issues facing seniors' workers including lack of sufficient staff for the work, working conditions, pay, fringe benefits, part/full time employment, moral injury and emotional stress based on documented studies and personal reports
- To demonstrate the importance of sufficient staff in improving quality of care for residents
- To outline future concerns on labor shortages and supply of workers to provide services to support increasing needs of the aging population
- To discuss and propose strategies and policies to address these issues.

### 1.2 Presenters and Themes

- **Webinar Chair: Vivien Lai, AAG Board Member and Chair, Futures Policy Forum Initiative**
  - Introduced the session by identifying workforce concerns as a local, provincial, and national concern—and a concern of high importance based on input from Webinars 1 and 2.
  - Provided an overview of the objectives and indicated the hope of AAG to follow this webinar with focused discussion of workforce development strategies in a future Think Tank.
- **Dr. Carol Estabrooks,** Professor and Canada Chair in Knowledge Translation, Faculty of Nursing, University of Alberta; National expert related to workforce issues and leader of TREC
  - Underscored the importance of inter-personal/relational approaches to designing work and teams
  - *Workforce development requires layers of change (like nested dolls, macro change to team development:* ): Set out six strategies for change to improve workforce retention and recruitment and employee morale:
    - a. Increase staffing levels in continuing care as soon as possible (4 hours of care—a place to start)
    - b. Examine how we work: design work for relational care and consistency in staffing
    - c. Prepare managers and supports for quality-of-life approaches
    - d. Increase Employee Assistance Programs
    - e. Examine Post-secondary education to prepare workers for new ways of working
    - f. Stop pilots: move to demonstration of new ways of working and move forward with this learning
  - Need better data to support future workforce needs (including data re current/aging workforce)
- **Pat Armstrong, Distinguished Research Emeritus Professor, York University, Toronto**
  - *Thesis: The conditions of work are the conditions of care*
  - Need to consider the totality of individuals who are/can be involved in work—employees PLUS families, private carers hired by families, support staff (housekeeping, food services); Front-line worker engagement is key: Autonomy, teamwork, empowerment
  - Encouraged more training for families with support by a designated person for 2-way communication; improve consistency of expectations for private companions and supports for integration with care team
  - Concerned about contracting out food services and housekeeping and risk of lack of team integration
- **Colleen Torgunrud, Clinical Ethicist, Alberta Health Services**
  - Described the impact of COVID on an already stressed/stretched workforce for overlapping of trauma/moral distress/compassion fatigue/burnout/grief and loss
  - Major concerns re attrition and loss of experience; disruption of redeployment and reduced relationships
  - Re-establishing relationships KEY; ("huddle up"); need self care before take care of others

- o **Discussants provided firsthand experiences of the stressors in workplaces across the province:**
  - **Ernsline Akinyode,** former Licenced Practical Nurse in Long-term care and Program Head, Health Care Side Program-Makami College
    - **--**Identified strong cultural disconnects (among staff; residents and staff) causing staff distress
    - --Spoke to lack of time to provide holistic care (the expectation) because of lack of staff. Attention to wholistic care is first to be cut (recreation, volunteer support, extra hands at mealtime)
  - **Karen McDonald**, Executive Director of Sage, and Chair of Interim Community Leadership Council, Healthy Aging Alberta: *"Developing a Coordinated Seniors' Serving Sector in Alberta"*
    - **--**Spoke to the large numbers of community services staff (social workers, recreationists, service coordinators) who are often not considered in workforce planning—and whose employment conditions are often inferior to persons employed in acute care and long-term care contributing to recruitment and retention problems
    - **--**Need systems data and new models to support expected increases in community-based services
  - **Daren Farnel**, Bayshore Health
    - --Spoke to gaps in remuneration of home care staff versus long-term care staff impacting recruitment and retention
    - --Expressed optimism that RFP process currently seeking new models for home care will be able to address contracting issues (eg payment of tasks) that make it difficult to recruit to permanent and complete jobs.

## 2.0 WEBINAR REACH

### 2.1 Webinar Registration and Attendance
- o **122 people attended the webinar (**out of over 300 registered with registration numbers including both preregistered from Webinar 1, 2 & new**)**
  - **Attendance remains high (**percentage related to cumulative preregistration numbers skew overall participation
  - Reasons for No Show were primarily related to personal scheduling challenges
  - NOTE: Registrants who are unable to attend have access to speaker slides & the video recording within days of the event for their own use according to their schedule (numbers accessing resources to come).
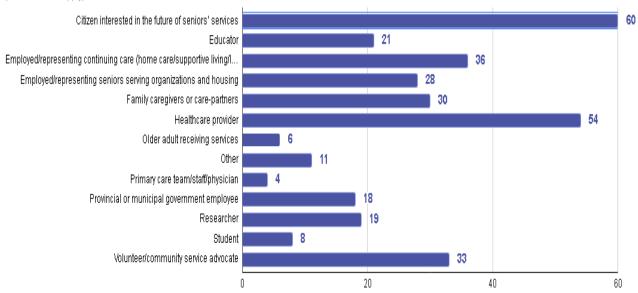
### 2.2 Geographic Coverage
- o Most participants were from Edmonton (36%) and Calgary (28%) followed by Sherwood Park, Lethbridge, St. Albert, Red Deer, High River

- o Analysis of postal codes shows the following breakdown of attendance:
  - Urban (the large cities): 85%
  - Sub Urban (around major centers): 10%
  - Rural -5% (note: 17% of the population of Alberta is Rural)

  **Attendance for urban centres higher than for both webinars 1 & 2**

## 2.3 Affiliation of Attendees

**Which of the following best describes you?**

*(Check all that apply)*



Of interest are : **The number of Educators—an increase from webinars 1 & 2**
The high number of individuals employed in continuing care and in seniors serving sectors
The participation of citizens –recipients today and in the future of services

## 2.4 Summary re Reach
o Webinar #3 has established a good base for further engagement geographically and by affiliation.
o Discussion with Post-Secondary Educators at the Stakeholder Collaborative Committee in September 2022 is an opportunity to broaden and deepen engagement of this sector—a key recommendation from Dr Estabrooks.

## 3.0 WEBINAR EXPERIENCE, PER POST-SURVEY QUESTIONS
## .. 32 responses as of June 27th, 2022 (26% of attendees)

## 3.1 Value of the Webinar
o **Participation in Webinar**
  • Most attendees viewed the webinar on their own**.**
o **Value of Information**—in order of importance
  • **Am encouraged this matter is being taken seriously in Alberta (50%)**
  • Plan to share the information learnt with colleagues (44%)
  • Lack of staff for the services I need is an experience I know well; it is a big concern (41%)
  • Hearing about the urgencies related to the workforce situation was new information to me (18%)
  • Did not find value participating in this webinar with an explanation why (1 person-3%)

- o **Expanding Capacity /Networks for Change: Over 25% of respondents see value in accessing speaker slides & video recordings.**

|  | Somewhat Likely | Very Likely |
|---|---|---|
| I will access these resources to review/refresh the Content for myself | 25/5 | 34% |
| I will encourage colleagues to access these resources | 19% | 50% |
| I will encourage others (non-colleagues) to access these resources | 22% | 47% |

  **..the intent to share these materials was significantly higher than in webinar 2 reflecting the importance to attendees**

## 3.3 Participant Comments—from Q & A content
- o **Webinar Value**
  - Thank you for the fabulous presentations in plain language
  - Excellent presentations; thank you for your bold leadership
  - An excellent webinar
  - Appreciate the great work & selection of speakers by AAG to profile this important area.
- o **Leadership-related questions to C. Estabooks**
  - Question re support for managers?  Answer: #1-acknowldegment & demonstration of their value; #2-adequate staff; #3-tailored support.  See worrying trend of managers intention to leave
  - Question re support for staff? Answer: Staff want to see leaders walk the talk, show up, help any relevant way they can
  - Question re strategies to move from pilots to scaled up implementation? Answer: People need to want commit to resources and figure it out. Need partnerships among government, researchers & operators. Need to translate research into "practical packages" for change
- o **Observations re the Way Forward**
  - Educators interested in input into curriculum for updates to gerontology-related learning
  - Engaging a robust community-based services sector is important. Requires intentional workforce planning. Supporting volunteers requires skilled staff.
  - Need to combat ageist backlash in workforce planning
  - Advocate for Green House model –small settings; dedicated staff, positive results (resident satisfaction; staff satisfaction)
  - The desire for "aging in place" is often used to push responsibility onto families & to put people into lower/ less expensive care for government whether they need LTC or not.
  - Incent foreign workers with clear paths to citizenship.

## 3.4  Summary: Value of Webinar for Learning & Engagement (Aim 1 for the webinar series)
- o Attendees valued the opportunity to learn from speakers, with their very relevant content. There is broad reach and the foundation to move forward.
- o The importance of this topic was underscored by participant comments and the high indication of intent to share materials from the Webinar with colleagues.

## 4.0 WHAT MATTERS TO PARTICIPANTS

### 4.1 Priorities for Change

Survey respondents placed a check mark in the box that best described their view of the priority for each of the change topics being discussed in Alberta and **ranked their priorities for action and opportunities for change** as follows:

| IMPORTANCE OF CHANGE (WITH # OF RESPONDENTS) | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **OPPORTUNITIES** | **Unsure** | **Not Import-ant** | **Less Import-ant** | **Import-ant** | **Very Import-ant** | **Very Important & Urgent** |
| **Placing attention to the need to improve the working conditions of seniors' care workers (including pay, fringe benefits, part-time/full-time positions** | 1 | | 1 | 2 | 6 | 23 |
| **Emphasizing the urgent need to increase staffing & worked hours in facility-based long-term care** | 1 | | 1 | 3 | 4 | 23 |
| **Highlighting the need for different care approaches, different staffing patterns & different mix of staff to transform the system & to address quality of life of the clients <u>and</u> quality of work life for team members** | 2 | | | 3 | 10 | 17 |
| **Placing attention on workforce implications in all new service delivery developments** | 2 | | | 6 | 7 | 17 |
| **Focusing on the possibility of a labor shortage for workers to care for Alberta's aging population and the need to increase support of workers** | 1 | | | 2 | 8 | 20 |
| **Removing service and system design barriers to effective teamwork & staffing effectiveness** | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 10 | 14 |
| **Examining urban and rural differences in attracting & retaining the workforce & developing strategies to address these differences** | 1 | | 1 | 5 | 10 | 12 |
| **Thinking creatively about how individual professionals can work with more flexibility to better serve client needs** | 1 | | | 5 | 10 | 15 |
| **Acknowledging the importance of non-profit community-based organizations & volunteers who provide many supports for well being** | 1 | | 1 | 2 | 13 | 14 |
| **Thinking creatively about how family caregivers might be recognized & supported financially to be part of the solution** | 2 | 1 | | 4 | 10 | 18 |
| **Emphasizing the need to view wage compensation & work benefits for seniors' services workers within a larger context of labor supply in the economy** | 2 | 2 | | 3 | 8 | 17 |

- o **Rankings are skewed to Important and Urgent and very important, indicating the importance of this subject. and urgency for action.**

- **Priorities for "<u>Very Important & Urgent</u>" Change, in consecutive order are as follows—and they echo speaker advice regarding action priorities:**

  #1:  >>Emphasizing the need to increase staffing & worked hours in facility-based long-term care
       >>Placing importance on the need to improve the working conditions of seniors' care workers

  #2: >>Focusing on the possibility of a labor shortage for workers to care for Alberta's aging population
          & the need to increase support of workers

  #3: >>Thinking creatively about how family caregivers might be recognized & supported financially to
          be part of the solution

  #4: >>highlighting the need for different care approaches, different staffing patterns & different mix of
          staff to transform the system & to address quality of life for clients <u>and</u> quality of work life for
          team members
      >>paying attention on workforce implications in all new service delivery developments
      >>emphasizing the need to view wage compensation for seniors' services workers within a larger
          context of labor supply in the economy

  #5:>>Thinking creatively about how individual professional can work with more flexibility to better
          serve client needs

  #6:>>Removing service & system design barriers to effective teamwork & staffing effectiveness
       >>Acknowledging the importance of non-profit community -based organizations & volunteers
          who provide many supports for well-being?

  #7: >>Examining urban & rural differences in attracting & retaining the workforce & developing
          strategies to address these differences
  *Priority rankings continue the trend from webinar 1 calling for significant change for facility-based continuing care WHILE pointing to the need for system-wide attention to workforce conditions and for creativity related to policies and practices.*


- **Priorities/priority clusters ranked as "<u>Very Important</u>" focus on developing an <u>environment</u> conducive to strengthening the seniors' services workforce, with 6 top priorities:**
  **#1:** Acknowledging the importance of non-profit community-based organizations & volunteers who provide
          many supports for well being
  #2:>>Highlighting the need for different care approaches, different staffing patterns & different mix of staff to
          transform the system & to address quality of life for clients and quality of work life for team members
      >>Thinking creatively about how individual professionals can work with more flexibility to better serve
          client needs
      >>Removing service and system design barriers to effective teamwork & staffing effectiveness
      >>Thinking creatively about how family caregivers might be recognized and supported financially to be part
          of the solution
      >>Examining urban and rural differences in attracting & retaining the workforce & developing strategies to
          address these differences
  *These priorities underscore the need to broaden approaches to the workforce planning—across services delivery practices, across expectations for specific hours/staffing approaches, across professional boundaries, across a broader definition of "team".*

## 4.2 General Feedback

**A. CONTEXT FOR CHANGE: Attendees were asked to share specific examples that illustrate both positive experiences and the challenges**

- o **Exemplars for quality of life:**
    - Cottage model by Good Samaritan Society with consistent staff for a household (an early model of supported living in Alberta with many concepts similar to the Greenhouse model).
    - Silvera for Seniors Supportive Living Environment
- o **Challenges:**

    a. Burnout: Volunteer visitor for 7 years in LTC; did not return after COVID; Single site order impacted staffing availability—staff tried to do their best for Infection Control & Prevention, even to the point of exhaustion with increasing sick calls.

    b. LTC Quality: Staff have little time to develop relationships with residents; Lack of staff is a frequent conversation among family & friends

    c. Practice Concerns:  Home Care Aides of color experience negative comments from residents and families; During COVID, restricting essential caregivers resulted in wife experiencing increased dementia; lack of primary care is making it difficult to provide care in the community

    d. Administrative Concerns: Current home care contracting approach for in-home care  results in revolving door of carers; home care self-managed care program challenged by levels of funding (insufficient hours; restricted types of services) and high administrative burden (paper work & challenging administrative supports); Separation of accountability for case management between AHS Home Care  and SL4 staff  results in gaps in care coordination with residents and families and reduces quality of work life for both AHS staff and SL4 staff

**B. RURAL-URBAN PERSPECTIVES: Attendees were asked to share perspectives to inform the way forward.**

- o **What's Important:**
    - Families need choices for care locations, not long commutes to support family members
    - Primary Healthcare is in serious trouble, especially primary care and this spills over to all healthcare
- o **Opportunities:**
    - Training needs to value both urban and rural services: identify spokespersons who can speak to positives of working in rural settings and promote in education programs
    - Increase training programs in community colleges
    - Provide flexibility in financial accountabilities to operators experiencing difficulties in hiring to meet line-by-line accountabilities.

**C.  GENERAL COMMENTS**

- o **Calls to Action: Employers/ Educators/Government:**
    - There is a stigma around LTC (long-term care) & SL(supported living) . When I went to school, I thought my only options were hospitals, home care or long-term care, all with their own challenges. Our seniors are not respected & there is not enough support for care for seniors as part of the school system. This needs to change, not to mention preserving our seniors' experience and diversity
    - Why are there not so many males in continuing care; why is unpaid work women's work?
    - We need to seek examples in Alberta and elsewhere regarding staff models that improve both quality of care and workforce satisfaction (eg Greenhouse model; Daniella Greenwood re Consistent Carers) —and use to inform action priorities.

        aA

- o **Calls to Action: Educators:**
  - Education should include a modern approach to "equality": NOT inequality between classes but equality within a class
  - All education should have a major section on dementia and cultural competence
  - Need to find out why nursing graduates are not working in LTC
  - NOTE: Webinar 2 regarding transforming community-based services spoke to the opportunity to increase practicums in community service settings. Also spoke to need to educate students regarding determinants of health as the underpinning to a focus for quality of living and person-directed care.

- o **Calls to Action: Government & Employers:**
  - <u>Homecare</u>: stop practice of approving hours to family using home care with family forced to split hours, pay less to make ends meet and meet care needs
  - <u>Staffing mix</u>: Too many nurses paid too much; too few non-nurses who are responsible for actual care giving.
  - There is <u>an immediate need for action to</u>:
    a. Stop further losses in FBCC (facility-based care) with increases in funding and in Home care with new models for contracting and strategies of funding that reduce cross-sector disparity in wages and benefits
    b. Move urgently to create policy flexibility for providers to demonstrate new models for staffing and care delivery to meet expectations for quality of life and sustain the workforce with quality of work life
    c. Develop a strategic approach for changes in post-secondary education—curriculum and partnerships with employers for practicums and workforce planning to support new service delivery models
    d. Concurrent with above, encourage Associations (eg Alberta Continuing Care Association, Christian Healthcare Association) to champion culture change with care providers (eg as espoused by the Pioneer Network for a culture of "citizenship "and researchers such as Dr. Sienna Caspar with her model for culture change) ; support Healthy Aging Alberta to fully develop strategies for change for community-based service sector.

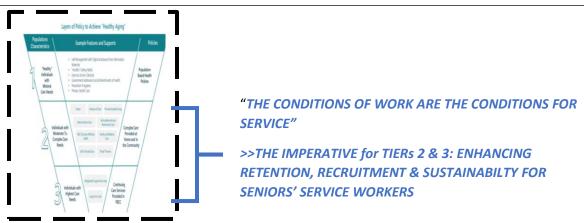## 4.3 SUMMARY—WHAT MATTERS TO PARTICIPANTS (AIM 2 for the Webinar Series)

- o **Speakers and participants underscore the <u>critical importance of action NOW</u> to address workforce retention and recruitment concerns:**
  - **By government: funding, and delivery flexibility** to enable employers to change the conditions for work to retain and sustain the current workforce—with attention to developing new approaches to staffing
    *---capitalizing on identified priorities for change in facility -based continuing care and home care*
    *---formalizing workforce planning and development strategies for the community-serving sector*
  - **By employers** to focus on both typical human resource aspects of creating a sustainable workforce AND culture change to support changing expectations of residents and employees for quality of life for residents (and families) and work with meaning for employees (eg leadership development, culture change development including cultural competency)
  - **By educators** to examine curriculum and approaches to education to enhance preparedness of graduates to meet resident needs with their increasing complexities and expectations for teamwork AND to expand enrollment to meet needs, thinking creatively about optimizing service environments across all sectors for student practicums.

- o **Participant comments continue a theme from previous webinars regarding the need to pay attention to the image of work with older adults and cultural change re ageism and diversity and inclusion.**
  - Including collaboration by employers and educators to engage students to see and experience positive careers with services for older adults.

- **Workforce issues are prioritized for their immediacy (above) followed by approaches to sustain the workforce for the full scope of the seniors' servicing sector for the long-term in a competitive environment for students and employees:**
  - Increasing education program enrollment to meet needs
  - Examining system design barriers to staffing effectiveness and workforce and resident satisfaction (eg SL4 design)
  - Examining Professional regulatory opportunities to increase flexibility for work and support for new models of service delivery
  - Examining foreign worker strategies

## 5.0 SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS: WEBINAR 3 CONTRIBUTIONS TO IMPROVING THE WORK ENVIRONMENT FOR SENIORS' SERVICES WORKERS

*Alberta's opportunity for change (MNP report) is dependant on people:*

> **ALBERTA'S OPPORTUNITY: VISION** *Albertans are supported to be healthy and active in their community, with an improved quality of life, and they are engaged, empowered, and enabled to live in inclusive communities with social connectedness and healthcare access.*



*"THE CONDITIONS OF WORK ARE THE CONDITIONS FOR SERVICE"*

*>>THE IMPERATIVE for TIERs 2 & 3: ENHANCING RETENTION, RECRUITMENT & SUSTAINABILTY FOR SENIORS' SERVICE WORKERS*

*The following schematic uses the typology of "nested dolls" introduced by Dr. Estabrooks to identify opportunities for action that respond to participant input and set out potential opportunities for change including2022/2023 plans of government in Alberta and action possibilities across all parties.*

- Priorities for action identified by Webinar participants are described in the schematic within domains of responsibility and potential opportunity areas in Alberta. Opportunities range from macro to micro and set in motion collaborative and concurrent action possibilities across the following domains:

  a. Macro—cross sectoral environmental impacts, responsibilities typically held by Government (responsible for funding and policy change) and professional/regulatory bodies

  b. System-wide change agents and service providers, as typified by post-secondary educators, system/regional planners/operators (including Alberta Health Services who implement government policy), and strategic development of service organizations

  **c.** Service Delivery Organizations who champion organization-specific actions to develop/support their workforce, strengthening overall outcomes by developing   community linkages for mutual gain; and who look to policy changes above to create significantly improved work environments

  d. Nested within Service Provider responsibilities are opportunities for workforce redesign and culture change initiatives with Care Teams and residents/clients and care partners

  e. Culminating in outcomes which can be measured related to quality of care and quality of work life.

**PROPOSED SCHEMATIC: IMPROVING WORK ENVIRONMENTS FOR SENIORS' SERVICES WORKERS AND DELIVERING ENHANCED RESULTS FOR QUALTIY OF CARE AND QUALITY OF WORK LIFE**

| FOCUS | WEBINAR INPUT | OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION |
|---|---|---|
| GLOBAL ECONOIMIC IMPACTS: WIDESPREAD WORKFORCE ISSUES<br><br>FED GOVT INITIATIVES<br><br>PROVINCIAL Legislation, funding, system design<br><br>PROFESSIONAL Bodies | *Macro planning Needs<br>-- Workforce Data (current & future) ; broad context re work<br>--Regulatory frameworks<br>*Supports Needed Now<br>--FBCC funding & models<br>--Home Care Funding & models<br>--Community services planning<br>--System Design/remove barriers | AH: Act/Regs--*workforce implications?*<br><br>AH: *Home care proposal calls; Potential to demonstrate new FBCC environments + new service delivery & staffing /funding model; FBCC Funding*<br><br>ASH/HAA*: Community Service Plan & workforce implications* |
| EDUCATION SYSTEM: k-12/PSE<br><br>SYSTEM/REGIONAL PLANS, incl Urban -Rural Flexibility<br><br>ORGANIZATION MISSION, VISION & VALUES & STRUCTURE<br><br>SERVICE DELIVERY SITE/PROGRAM<br><br>COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT<br><br>CARE/PROGRAM TEAM (care micro system; work & care/service environment) | *Action- By Post-Secondaries; Preparation & Supply Supply & Preparation<br>*Remove Barriers for teamwork & consistent staffing/full jobs<br>*Organizational Leadership-Mission, Vision, Values & HHR systems<br>--Site based; community-focused<br>--Technology for healthy aging<br>*Healthy Aging Alberta (HAA) -- connecting seniors service sector + community mapping<br>*Addressing Cultural Divides | AH/ASH: Recognize & reward new models in above proposal calls<br>--plans to remove system barriers<br><br>Post-secondary Education—TBD<br><br>Organizational Initiatives :<br>a. Leadership for cultural change<br>b. Leadership to improve working conditions<br><br>HAA/regional success stories TBD<br><br>Future AAG/Futures Policy Forum Initiatives--TBD |
| PEOPLE WORKING TOGETHER FOR QUALITY OF LIFE & WORK WITH MEANING | *Collaborative Culture Change Development including cultural competency<br>*Consistent carers | Organizational Initiatives (*supported by new conditions for work*): **Develop team-based service delivery models with innovation in staffing** |
| | *Engagement/citizenship focus in practice<br>*Outcomes that matter | -AH/AHS quality of life outcomes supported by new supports for the workforce |

**AAG's Future Policy Forum Initiative will build on findings from Webinar 3 with the following initiatives:**
**1. Engaging the Stakeholder Collaborative Committee (SCC) in September 2022 regarding:**
a. Status of action opportunities outlined in the foregoing schematic to support work of Workforce Think Tank
b. Additional opportunities for action, including building on SCC discussion (April 2022) with Dr. Sienna Caspar regarding strategies for culture change for relationship-focused care delivery, key to both quality of life for residents and quality of work life for team members
c. Dialogue with Post-Secondary Educators regarding current and proposed initiatives to enhance supply and preparedness of seniors' services workers.
**2. Developing plans for a potential Think Tank regarding Improving the Work Environment for Senior's Services Workers (Fal 2022 or Spring 2023)…**co-sponsored with the Alberta Gerontological Nurses Association
…engaging experts and a cross section of stakeholders to develop key policy strategies for change, for recommendation to government and others as appropriate