

May 3, 2023

AN OPEN LETTER TO ALBERTA POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS

How Government Can Take Meaningful Action to Support Albertans Living with Dementia.

As we approach the provincial election, the Alzheimer Society of Alberta and Northwest Territories invites you to share our vision for a dementia-friendly Alberta. We are committed to raising the voices of people affected by dementia across the province and sharing their ideas on how government can take meaningful action to support people living with dementia.

We have identified three priorities for dementia support in Alberta:

1. A COMMITMENT TO A RENEWED DEMENTIA STRATEGY FOR ALBERTA.

An estimated 59,000 Albertans are living with dementia, and within a generation, we know this number will **more than triple**. Our province needs to be prepared with a comprehensive plan to effectively support people living with dementia and their families, from diagnosis to end-of-life. The Alberta Dementia Strategy and Action Plan (2017) outlined key outcomes with enablers for dementia care. These commitments must be supported by a system-wide implementation strategy to ensure meaningful improvements in how Albertans affected by dementia are supported throughout their journey with the disease.

2. ENSURING A HEALTHCARE SYSTEM THAT MEETS THE NEEDS OF ALBERTANS AFFECTED BY DEMENTIA.

People living with dementia have been hit particularly hard by COVID-19, highlighting the many challenges they experience throughout the continuum of care. Most residents in Alberta's care homes are living with dementia and experiencing high degrees of isolation, profoundly affecting their quality of life. **Now more than ever, provincial standards for best practices in person-centered dementia care must be embedded across all health settings.** This includes evidence-based dementia-specific education and training for staff, sustainable increases to staffing capacity, and recognizing families as essential members of the care team.

3. EXPANDED ACCESS TO THE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES AVAILABLE THROUGH FIRST LINK® DEMENTIA SUPPORT.

Other provinces jointly fund the First Link® program. First Link® is the Society's suite of programs and services available to anyone affected by dementia, anywhere in the province. Recognized as a best practice in dementia care, First Link® programs and services are designed to help families affected by dementia develop the skills and confidence to maintain the best quality of life possible



and aligns with the government's stated goals of supporting Albertans in their home communities for as long as possible.

The 2022 Landmark Study (Navigating the Path Forward for Dementia in Canada¹), documented more than 40 million annual unpaid hours of support by informal care partners. This is the equivalent of approximately 23,000 Health Care Aids.

Working alongside the Provincial Government, the Alzheimer Society of Alberta and Northwest Territories raises the voices of people with lived experience and helps inform policies of importance to people affected by dementia. **The continuation of this partnership is integral to the sustainability of First Link® and the essential support it provides to Albertans affected by dementia.**

Thank you for your attention to the items outlined above. This letter, **along with official party responses, will be shared on our website so people affected by dementia can stay informed as we approach the election.** The Society looks forward to working with the next government of Alberta to make meaningful strides towards a dementia-friendly province; where no one affected by dementia walks alone.

Sincerely,



Dr. George Andrews, DBA
President & CEO

The Alzheimer Society of Alberta & Northwest Territories
On behalf of families affected by dementia in Alberta.

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¹ https://alzheimer.ca/sites/default/files/documents/Landmark-Study-Report-1-Path_Alzheimer-Society-Canada.pdf