

Alzheimer *Society*

ALBERTA AND
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

2023 Provincial Election Toolkit

2023 Election Resource Guide

This resource guide has been developed to provide our stakeholders and advocates with information about dementia and tools to engage with political parties and candidates during the 2023 Alberta election.

Engaging in conversation with parties and candidates prior to the election will help to open dialogue and build a foundation for working together with government, opposition parties, and elected representatives and their staffs after the election concludes.

The Alzheimer Society approach is **nonpartisan** – meaning we provide information about election topics and issues but do not favour or criticize a specific political party or candidate. Our aim is to foster open discussions and dialogue about issues that impact those living with dementia, their families and care providers.

We hope to make Dementia a health and social priority and help ensure every party, candidate and elected representative knows the importance and value of caring for and supporting people living with dementia and their care partners.

There are simple ways you can get involved and engage with local representatives and candidates this election season:

- **Attend a candidate forum** to hear from the candidates and ask questions about their stance on issues related to dementia.
- **Ask for a meeting** with your local candidates by calling, emailing, or sending a letter to their constituency or campaign office.
- **Post/share on social media** on dementia issues and priorities
- **Share stories, questions, and experiences** directly with candidates by sending a letter to their campaign office or team
- **Ask questions** about where a candidate/party stands on issues relating to dementia when candidates and /or canvassers come to your door.

What's in the package:

The Alzheimer Society has prepared some tools and resources to help make dementia a health and social priority during the election. Included in the toolkit you'll find:

1. Alzheimer Society of Alberta and Northwest Territories election advocacy information.
2. Sample questions to ask canvassers and candidates to find out where they stand on dementia issues and priorities.
3. Sample social media posts to help engage your friends, family and networks on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and/or [Twitter](#) in conversation about dementia.
4. Background information on election advocacy priorities.
5. Additional tips and ways to advocate during the election.
6. Dementia by the numbers – a snapshot of the most recent statistics on dementia in Alberta.

2023 Election Advocacy

The Alzheimer Society calls on all parties to commit to making dementia a priority this election. 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.

Our Election Priorities:

1. 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-centred 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.

2. 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 as long as possible.

3. 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.

Questions to Ask

Attending a town hall, candidates forum or when canvassers come to your door provides a great opportunity to ask where a party or candidate stands on issues relating to dementia. Here are some suggested questions you can use to engage representatives in conversation about dementia.

Question:

There are approximately 59,000 Albertans living with dementia, and many more impacted by the disease. Do you consider dementia a top health priority that our elected representatives must act upon?

Question:

Early intervention and support after receiving a diagnosis of dementia are critical – First Link® connects people to the support and services they need. If elected, will you support investment in an Alberta Dementia Strategy and Action plan to ensure vital services such as First Link® are available to individuals living with dementia to get the support and connection to services they need?

Question:

Will you (or how will you) and your party advocate for support for people and families who are providing care for someone living with dementia?

Question:

People living with dementia, including care partners, family, and friends – experience many challenges; among them, stigma, discrimination, and barriers in the community. If elected, will you (or how will you) and your party advocate for and support ongoing investment in policies, initiatives and programs that reduce stigma, foster inclusivity, and are accessible to individuals living with dementia, their families, and their care partners?

Social Media

Social media, such as [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Linkedin](#) or [Twitter](#), can be a very useful tools to share your ideas and priorities about dementia with friends, family and candidates running for a seat in the legislature. To help engage your networks on issues and concerns around dementia, we've developed a few simple posts that you can use to get people thinking and talking about dementia.

Here are a few hashtags you can use to help promote your message:

#dementia #ABpoli #ABleg #dementiaawareness
#dementiaalberta #dementiaAB

Sample Social Media Messages for Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn:

- There are approximately 59,000 Albertans living with dementia, and many more are impacted by the disease. Enhanced care and support for people living with dementia and care partners needs to be a priority this election.
- Early intervention and support after receiving a diagnosis of dementia are critical. First Link® connects people to the support and services they need. Help ensure adequate investment is available for individuals living with dementia to get the support and connection to services they need.
- People living with dementia, including care partners, family, and friends – experience many challenges; among them, stigma, discrimination, and barriers in the community. As a province, we must unite to put an end to dementia stigma so that everyone in our community feels comfortable talking about dementia and sharing their own experience.

Twitter

- Let's make sure people living with dementia and their care partners get the help they need. Help make dementia a priority in the 2023 Alberta election.
- Approximately 59,000 Albertans are living with dementia, and many more are impacted by the disease. Help make dementia a priority this election.

Meeting with Individual Party Candidates

If you feel comfortable, you may want to ask candidates running in your riding for a one-on-one meeting to discuss the importance of making dementia a priority in this election. Here are a couple of bullets that you may find helpful to frame your conversation.

Meeting with NDP Candidates

- Thank the candidate and recognize the party's work in developing and releasing the Alberta Dementia Strategy and Action Plan (2017).
- Emphasize that, while was wonderful to have a dementia strategy, funding that supports its continuation and further implementation is important to ensure people live well with dementia now and into the future.

- NDP recently announced a \$750-million plan that would build and renovate 40 clinics based on the model in Alberta, as well as hire an additional 4,000 allied health professionals.
- You can let the candidate know that these investments are helpful. However, the government can play a more significant role in supporting people living with dementia and their care partners, and this must be a top government priority.
- The provincial government can impact housing, healthcare, social services, and the workplace. The provincial government can also support community and charitable organizations that provide resources, services, and support to individuals with dementia, family members and care partners.
- You can ask them about other ways they intend to support individuals affected by dementia.

Meeting with candidates of the United Conservative Party

- Thank the candidate and recognize the party's work to support [Bill 11](#), which is intended to help improve continuing care and address gaps in the system.
- The UCP also recently announced \$2 billion in funding to hire more doctors, nurses, and paramedics.
- You can let the candidate know that these investments are helpful. However, the government can play a more significant role in supporting people living with dementia and their care partners, and this must be a top government priority.
- The provincial government can impact housing, healthcare, social services, and the workplace. The provincial government can also support community and charitable organizations that provide resources, services, and support to individuals living with dementia, family members and care partners.
- You can ask them about other ways they intend to support individuals affected by dementia.

Other parties

You can access [a complete list of registered parties running in the 2023 provincial election and contact information here](#)

Regardless of what party they represent, don't assume they know about dementia. You may need to educate them and share your personal story. Ask all candidates how they plan to support dementia if elected. Feel free to provide them with a copy of the Alzheimer Society of Canada's Landmark Study (2022) which outlines dementia rates by province. [You can access the Landmark Study report here](#). Alberta's information is detailed on page 40 and 41 of the report. There are also ideas about what provincial governments can do to support individuals living with dementia (page 50).

Election Advocacy Tips

Elections provide an opportunity for all of us to express our opinion by using our right to vote. Advocacy tactics can help to educate the public as well as political candidates about issues that affect individuals living with dementia and raise awareness about our cause. Here are some examples of action that can be taken prior to and during an election campaign.

1. Answer your door and telephone

- Candidates are finding many people will not come to the door or take a phone call. If you want to meet candidates in your constituency, make yourself available.
- Keep your questions to ask by the door and phone so you are not caught off guard.

2. Meet with Candidates

- Request a 20-minute meeting via phone or email.
- Practice what you want to say.
- Introduce yourself, tell your story, ask your question, leave time for discussion and other questions, and be prepared to let them know how they can help improve things and support individuals affected by dementia.
- Thank the candidate for their time.
- Offer to be a resource if they have any questions in the future.
- Consult [Elections Alberta website](#) for a full list of candidates and their electoral ridings.

4. Attend All-Candidate Forums/Town Halls

- Ask, in advance, about the format for the forum and how questions may be submitted.
- Submit your question(s) or be prepared to ask your question at the event.

5. Participate in Community Events

- Be prepared to discuss the issues.
- Ask organizers if it would be appropriate to provide information to people attending the event.
- Become involved with community election action via your church, social groups, etc.

6. Start Community Action if none exists

- Talk to your friends, family, co-workers, and neighbours about the issues.
- Complete any surveys, attend rallies, join social media groups, etc. and tell your friends about the opportunity to do so.
- Provide them with information on forums, polling stations and advance polls.
- Encourage them to vote.
- Spread the word through social media.
- Share issues and stories of impact (use images and videos as much as possible).
- Tag candidates, parties, organizations, and people and include hashtags.
- Post questions on candidates' Facebook pages, etc. and share their answers.
- Follow and respond to public opinion influencers like media columnists, party leaders, etc.

7. Volunteer

- Research candidates in your riding. If you support one, volunteer to help with their campaign.
- Use your role to educate the candidate and other volunteers about health issues.

8. Help take others to their voting stations.

9. Write Letters/Emails to all Candidates and request a response.

10. VOTE!

[Consult the Elections Alberta website for information about how to vote, when and your voting location.](#)

Backgrounder - Alzheimer Society of Alberta and Northwest Territories (appendix 1)

The Alzheimer Society is dedicated to improving the quality of life of Albertans living with Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias. We are striving for an Alberta where people living with dementia and their care partners have access to the resources, services, and care they need and are supported to live well.

Alberta’s population is aging. While dementia is not a normal part of aging, the risk of developing dementia increases as people age. We know that the number of people living with dementia is increasing, as is the economic burden to the province. To meet the growing needs, the Alzheimer Society believes that supporting those impacted by dementia must be a priority now and for the future.

Approximately 59,000 Albertans are living with dementia, and many more are impacted by the disease. Enhanced care and support for people living with dementia needs to be a priority for the government.

We encourage investment in the Alberta Dementia Strategy and Action plan to ensure vital services such as First Link® are available to Albertans living with dementia, their families, and care partners to get the support and connection to services they need as soon as possible.

First Link® is an evidence-based program with key elements and standards offered by Alzheimer Societies across Canada. AS AB/NT is currently serving over 7800 clients through First Link®.

First Link® is a program that provides support to people with dementia and their caregivers through a referral process for physicians and health and community service providers to directly refer people living with Alzheimer’s Disease and other dementias and their families to the Alzheimer Society for services and support, from diagnosis throughout the duration of the disease. First Link® is an important element in a coordinated care system and is a “gateway” through which all those whose lives have been touched by dementia can access support and service. Connecting people living with dementia to information, support, and services early in the disease is important because it helps them develop competency and resilience to face their journey with dementia by providing:

- Help with planning
- Education
- Support and information
- Linkages to other support services
- Access to dementia-specific expertise

As a result of outreach to community health professionals, partnerships and relationship-building referrals have more than doubled over the past three years. It is anticipated that due to the growth in dementia diagnoses and the high demand from caregivers for our community-based support and services, client

Dementia is a term used to describe a set of symptoms or behaviours that may include memory loss, difficulty with problem-solving and changes in mood and behaviour. Dementia is identified when these symptoms are severe enough to interfere with a person’s daily life and activities. Dementia is progressive, meaning the symptoms will get worse over time.

referrals will at least double over the next three years. By 2050 we expect rates of diagnosis in Alberta to increase by 286% (Alzheimer’s Society, 2022).

Dementia in Alberta by the numbers

Public policy and the delivery of healthcare must reflect the reality of people living with dementia, their families and care partners. The Alzheimer Society champions efforts to ensure that dementia is a healthcare priority in Alberta.

WHAT WE ARE FACING IN 2023:

- **In Alberta, its estimated 59,000 individuals live with dementia; by 2050, we expect this to increase by 286%.**
- **Current and projected number of unpaid dementia care partners and hours of care in Alberta:**
 - **2020: 30,300 (40.1 million hours/year)**
 - **2050: 118,200 (161.4 million hours/year)**
- In Canada, 61.8% of those living with dementia in 2020 were women.
- Over \$10.4 billion: the annual cost of dementia to the Canadian economy and healthcare system.
- 56% of Canadians are concerned about being affected by dementia.
- 46% of Canadians admit they would feel ashamed or embarrassed if they had dementia.
- 87% of caregivers wish that more people understood the realities of caring for someone with dementia.

(Source: [Navigating the Path Forward for Dementia in Canada: The Landmark Study Report #1](#), Alzheimer Society of Canada, September 2022.)