

Advocacy update

The Alzheimer Society of B.C. is committed to ensuring that the information we hear from people affected by dementia is reflected in our work.

There are two kinds of advocacy we focus on: self-advocacy and systemic advocacy. Self-advocacy refers to what we do to improve a situation for ourselves, a family member or another person. Systemic advocacy focuses on improving the entire system for the benefit of everyone and can be done at the federal, provincial or municipal level.



In 2023 we have:

- Held community dialogues in Vernon and Prince George.
- Engaged with elected officials, including several Members of the Legislative Assembly and Members of Parliament across the province.
- Participated in policy submissions aimed at improving support for people affected by dementia.

Community dialogues

This summer, we launched a series of community dialogue events in partnership with local MLAs to meet with people affected by dementia to learn about how dementia affects them and understand where there is room for improvement or expansion of Society services. In July, we held an event in Vernon in partnership with MLA Harwinder Sandhu, Parliamentary Secretary for Seniors' Services and Long-Term Care. In August, we worked with MLA Shirley Bond, shadow minister for Health, Seniors Services and Long-Term Care, to host a session in Prince George. Both events were a huge success thanks to the community members who shared their stories and the support of our community partners. Insights shared will inform our work as we prepare for the 2024 provincial election.

Vernon: More than 65 community members joined us at the Prestige Hotel in Vernon on July 18. Following rich discussion on access to health care and support, climate emergencies, living in rural areas and housing, key themes emerged:

- The need for a clear clinical dementia care pathway.
- The need for more access to support and respite for care partners.
- First Link® is a vital service.

Prince George: Over 50 community members joined the Alzheimer Society of B.C. in Prince George at the Elder Citizens Recreation Association on August 15 to discuss the same critical issues put forward for the Vernon event. The key themes included the need for:

- Increased information sharing.
- Reduced social isolation.
- Appropriate and affordable housing.

We plan to host more community dialogues, so keep an eye out for when we may be bringing an event to your local area.

Engaging with elected officials

Over the summer, we met with dignitaries across the province to provide information about the Alzheimer Society of B.C. and highlight the needs of people living with dementia in their ridings and across the province. In the last few months, we have met with six MLAs and two MPs. These conversations are a helpful way for us to understand the priorities of different dignitaries and enable us to identify how we can work with them as decision makers. As part of our response to the federal government's call for feedback on the Safe Long-Term Care Act, we engaged with MPs and the offices of both federal and provincial health ministers.

Policy submissions

Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services: Over the summer, we presented recommendations in person before the provincial Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services, highlighting the pressing need for a provincial dementia strategy and more support for British Columbians affected by dementia. The committee's report was published on August 3 and included our recommendation to fund a provincial dementia strategy.

Bill C-295: We shared our feedback federally with a parliamentary committee assigned to review proposed changes to the Criminal Code to address the abuse and neglect of people living in long-term care. Our recommendations included increasing funding in the long-term care sector to meet the new care standards introduced by the Health Standards Organization and the Canadian Standards Association. Alongside funding, we emphasized the need for a human resources strategy to address recruitment, retention and professional development of staff to improve quality of care for everyone living in long-term care.



Consultations in advance of the federal budget 2024: We presented two recommendations for the federal government's consideration: allocate one per cent of dementia care costs to federal dementia research and prioritize diverse types of support, including financial assistance and programs for unpaid caregivers of people living with dementia as a part of a larger national caregiver strategy. This input was based on feedback we have received from people with lived experience of dementia.

Safe Long-Term Care Act: Our submission in response to the federal government's call for feedback on the Safe Long-Term Care Act also represents consultations with people with lived experience. It identifies broad systemic challenges facing long-term care, including inadequate resourcing for care homes and critical staff shortages. Our feedback underscores the pressing need for federal funding in Canada's long-term care sector and targeted senior care funding transfers to provinces and territories.

Issues we are hearing about

Recently, people affected by dementia have reached out to the Alzheimer Society of B.C. on a range of different topics, including:

- The Charter of Rights for people with dementia, navigating issues within the health-care system and understanding the complaints process.
- Writing effective letters, record keeping and referral information for organizations like the Office of the Seniors Advocate and the Patient Care Quality Office.

Ways to get involved

We encourage advocates with lived experience to share their stories with government representatives and amplify the Alzheimer Society of B.C.'s messaging. You can find information on how to contact your local MLA on this website and you can find your local MP to discuss federal issues here. Other opportunities to become involved include supporting in-person events or sharing your views on government policy to ensure the voices of people with lived experience are heard on issues that affect them. If you are interested in learning more about systemic advocacy, please email us at advocacy@alzheimerbc.org.



alzbc.org/FLDHL

Questions or concerns about dementia or memory loss?

First Link® Dementia Helpline

English (9 a.m. to 8 p.m.)	1-800-936-6033
Cantonese and Mandarin (9 a.m. to 4 p.m.)	1-833-674-5007
Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu (9 a.m. to 4 p.m.)	1-833-674-5003