

October 21, 2020

To the Alzheimer Society of B.C.,

Thank you for your correspondence regarding the priorities of the Alzheimer Society of B.C, including your proposed next steps on developing a provincial dementia strategy, ensuring support is adequate through the COVID-19 pandemic, and next steps for the First Link program.

As you know, receiving a diagnosis of Alzheimer's or another form of dementia can feel overwhelming and isolating for patients and families. The BC NDP remains committed to supporting people - and their families - cope with the overwhelming changes this disease causes, and to help plan for the future. We also know that due to the stigma of dementia and the difficulties in obtaining a diagnosis, there are likely more people living with the disease than the current 70,000 in British Columbia with a diagnosis. It is essential that we reduce stigma and help make sure people are supported to learn about the disease.

That is why our government, in 2019, provided \$2.7 million in funding to the First Link program. The support of a community can go a long way in helping people with dementia and their families - and that is what the First Link program provides. The BC NDP remains committed to ensuring this essential program continues to receive adequate funding.

Our government has made investing in seniors care a priority - both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Seniors care remains a priority for the BC NDP going-forward, and our 2020 election platform commits to increasing support for seniors. Our full platform can be viewed here: <https://www.bcndp.ca/platform>.

Of particular interest to the Alzheimer Society of B.C are the following commitments:

- **Hiring 7,000 new health care workers in long-term care and assisted living:** In addition to bringing back the long-term care jobs that were privatized by the BC Liberals, we're investing \$44 million to hire and train 7,000 new health care workers for long-term care homes and assisted living facilities. This Health Career Access Program will provide new opportunities for workers who lost their jobs in other sectors due to COVID-19
- **Delivering better care for seniors through a better deal for workers:** We will develop a staffing retention strategy that provides workers in long-term care and assisted living with "levelled up wages" even after the pandemic ends, and restore provincial standards for wages, benefits, and working conditions that were cut by the BC Liberals
- **Building better, public long-term care homes:** We're working with non-profits to build public care homes that keep seniors safer, healthier and more comfortable
- **Improving home care for safe, independent living:** We'll expand publicly funded home care to provide better care and help with daily living – bathing, dressing, meal preparation and more – so that people can stay in their own homes for as long as is safely possible. It will also improve continuity of care with seniors receiving visits from a more consistent group of care aides
- **Launching a Silver Alert system:** Working with community groups and the BC Seniors Advocate, we will develop a made-in-BC Silver Alert system to help assist first responders locate missing seniors, particularly those with dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

While a long-term dementia strategy was not included in our platform, the BC NDP - should we form the next government - would be happy to meet with the Alzheimer Society of B.C to discuss this initiative. This is an important goal, and we commit to working towards meaningful improvements in how British Columbians affected by dementia are supported throughout their journey with the disease. This strategy could include provincial standards for best practices in person-centred dementia care.

We also hope to consult with you on our proposed made-in-BC Silver Alert system.

We look forward to meeting with you in the near future, regardless of the outcome of the election.

Regards,
BC NDP

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