



DEMENTIA MUST BE A PRIORITY FOR OUR NEXT GOVERNMENT

In Nova Scotia, there are currently more than 16,000 people living with dementia, and this number is increasing steadily each year. This condition not only impacts those diagnosed but also creates challenges for care partners including financial hardships and impacts to their physical and emotional health. The dementia care system across the continuum is strained.



By voicing your concerns and advocating for comprehensive dementia care, we can ensure that the needs of all those affected by dementia are prioritized.

The Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia is advocating for 4 key dementia care priorities:



1. Help break down stigma.

Fund and promote a targeted dementia awareness campaign for health care professionals. Increase awareness and understanding that dementia is *not* a normal part of aging.

Why It Matters: Stigma has a profound impact on people living with dementia, as well as families, friends and care partners. It can cause people to delay seeking help from health care providers. When they do express their concerns to a doctor, they are frequently told that the signs and symptoms they're experiencing are a normal part of aging. The lack of understanding of dementia among health care providers can delay diagnosis and access to treatment and support.



2. Improve the diagnosis experience.

Promote the Best Practice Toolkit for Dementia Diagnosis, Management and Care Planning developed for primary health care providers as part of the Nova Scotia Dementia Strategy. Disseminate the National Dementia Guidelines for Disclosing and Communicating a Diagnosis of Dementia.

Why It Matters: People living with dementia tell us accessing a diagnosis is difficult. This is due in part to limited access to primary care providers, and the fact that many health care professionals are not comfortable making a diagnosis. The perception among health care professionals that there are limited treatment options for dementia is also a barrier to diagnosis. An early diagnosis is important because it gives people the opportunity to access valuable supports and services, be involved in decisions that affect their life and make plans for their future. Disclosing the diagnosis with compassion is key to maintaining dignity and hope for the future.



3. Encourage Dementia Friendly Community developments.

Include specific funding for Dementia Friendly Community initiatives in the Age-Friendly Communities Grant program especially for equity deserving communities.

Why It Matters: A Dementia Friendly Community is a place where people living with dementia feel included and supported. It ensures people can age in place and remain active, engaged members of their communities. Dementia Friendly initiatives make spaces more inclusive, supportive and accessible for everybody! As dementia impacts a wide range of people with many characteristics, it is critical that our communities work toward inclusion for all.



4. Increase investments across the care continuum for people living with dementia and their care partners.

Ensure the right support is available at the right time. Provide greater access to respite beds in long-term care facilities. Evaluate eligibility for respite as a home support service for all dementia care partners (including younger care partners) in the NS Home Care policy.

Why It Matters: Most people with dementia live at home with the support of care partners. We frequently hear from care partners that they lack respite support. Given the stress of caregiving, care partners often become secondary patients themselves. It is imperative that the government optimize respite resources so care partners get the breaks they need to care for their own physical and emotional health needs.

Join Us in Making Dementia a Priority

Your commitment to these priorities will help ensure that dementia care is adequately addressed in our province. We look forward to your support and action on these critical issues.