

Alzheimer Society launches first-ever Canadian Charter of Rights for People with Dementia

Charter written by and for people living with dementia

Toronto, ON – September 5, 2018 – Today, the Alzheimer Society of Canada is pleased to officially launch the first-ever Canadian Charter of Rights for People with Dementia.

The landmark Charter is the culmination of over a year's work by the Society's Advisory Group of people with dementia, whose members represent different walks of life from across the country. With the number of Canadians with dementia expected to hit nearly one million in less than 15 years, the Advisory Group set out to define a set of seven explicit rights to give a greater voice and authority to those with dementia. The Charter will help people with dementia as well as their families challenge situations where they experience stigma, are treated unfairly, discriminated against, or are denied access to appropriate care.

The Charter empowers Canadians with dementia to self-advocate while also ensuring that the people and organizations that support them know and protect their rights. These include the right:

- to be free from discrimination of any kind.
- to benefit from all of Canada's civic and legal rights.
- to participate in developing and implementing policies that affect their life.
- to access support and opportunities to live as independent and engaged citizens in their community.
- to be informed and supported so they can fully participate in decisions affecting their care and life, from the point of diagnosis to palliative and end-of-life care.
- to expect that professionals involved in all aspects of their care are trained in dementia and human rights and are accountable to uphold these rights.
- to access effective complaint and appeal procedures when their rights are not protected or respected.

"People with dementia, no matter the stage of their disease, have the same rights as every other citizen," says Pauline Tardif, CEO of the Alzheimer Society of Canada. "Yet, we know all too well that Canadians with dementia continue to face cultural, social and economic barriers to claiming these rights, leaving many facing discrimination, isolation and treatment that contravenes their basic rights as human beings. We're asking all Canadians to champion this new Charter."

The Charter will not only help combat the ongoing stigma associated with dementia, but also help inform a rights-based approach to the development of services and supports for Canadians with dementia. In particular, it will serve to guide the federal government as it follows through on its

commitment to develop and implement a national dementia strategy for Canada.

British Columbia resident Mario Gregorio, one of the Advisory Group members who contributed to the Charter, says “As a person living with dementia, it gives me confidence to know that I’m not alone and reassurance that my country, my health and social services and my family, friends and community are there to lend a hand. We, as a nation, need to play a leadership role to ensure that people with dementia are not marginalized.”

Throughout the month of September, the Society will feature stories written by some of the Advisory Group members on what the Charter means to them, and invite others impacted by dementia to comment. To read the stories, learn more about the Charter and download a free copy, in English or French, visit alzheimer.ca/Charter.

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Notes to editors:

The Canadian Charter of Rights for People with Dementia is guided by a human rights-based approach known as “PANEL,” endorsed by the United Nations. This approach emphasizes: the rights of everyone to **participate** in all decision-making directing their quality of life and care; **accountability**, holding individuals, communities and organizations responsible for recognizing, protecting and fulfilling their rights; **non-discrimination**, to self-advocate and challenge stigma; **empowerment**, to know their rights and how to claim these; and **legality**, to have assurance their rights are understood and followed according to law.