



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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\$2 Million Funding to Expand First Link[®] Program

Province-wide – An injection of \$2 million by the Ministry of Health to support the Alzheimer Society of B.C.'s First Link[®] program will mean even more individuals and families can access services and support as soon as possible after receiving a diagnosis of dementia. The one-time funding will support the expansion of First Link, an early intervention service where a formal referral from a physician or health professional allows the Society to proactively extend support to individuals and families.

"This support is very encouraging for the Society's work to provide early intervention and educate the public about the disease and the help that is available," says Larry Okotinsky, Acting CEO for the Alzheimer Society of B.C. "We see this as a step forward for the First Link[®] program and our efforts to meet the growing need by British Columbian families for support on the dementia journey."

Jim Mann is certainly one B.C. resident who feels encouraged by this announcement. Jim was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in 2007 and for the past several months has been visiting communities across the province hosting town halls with the Alzheimer Society of B.C. as part of the *Jim's Push for a Plan* campaign.

In 2011, the Society served 8,500 new clients in B.C., a 34 per cent increase over the previous year. To date, more than 2,600 B.C. families are currently connected with the Society through First Link, with 1,200 of these being new families referred in the past year alone. First Link operates in Greater Victoria, North and Central Vancouver Island, North and Central Okanagan, Northern Interior and Skeena, North Fraser, Richmond/South Delta and Vancouver.

Alzheimer's disease is the third most feared disease by British Columbians and the Alzheimer Society of B.C. provides the only province-wide network of support, education and information for families impacted by dementia.

About Dementia

Dementia is a term that describes a general group of brain disorders. Symptoms include the loss of memory, impaired judgment, and changes in behaviour and personality. Dementia is progressive, degenerative and eventually terminal. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia accounting for almost two-thirds of dementias in Canada today.

About the Alzheimer Society of B.C.

The Alzheimer Society of B.C. provides a provincial network of support and education for families impacted by dementia and people concerned about memory loss. Communities across the province count on the Society for support services, information and education programs, advocacy to improve dementia care in B.C., and to fund research to find the causes and cures. As part of a national federation, the Society is a leading health authority on the disease in Canada. Learn more at www.alzheimerbc.org.

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