



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Saturday November 8, 2014

### **\$4 million From Province to Expand First Link® Dementia Support**

**Vancouver, B.C.** – The Alzheimer Society of B.C. wishes to thank the Ministry of Health for \$4 million in new funding for the expansion of the First Link® program to more communities across the province by 2018. Health Minister Terry Lake announced the funding at the Alzheimer Resource Centre in Vancouver.

“At some point, dementia will touch our lives, whether it is through a parent, a relative, a friend or our own diagnosis with this disease,” said Lake. “This can be an emotional time not only for family and friends, but especially for the person affected. The First Link program helps individuals to better understand their diagnosis and get the information and resources necessary to manage their lives.”

The Society is partnering with the Province of B.C. in renewing the Dementia Action Plan.

"Today's announcement of \$4 million for the Alzheimer Society of B.C.'s First Link program will ensure that even more people around British Columbia have access to the services they need to support them as they face their journey with dementia," said Michelle Stilwell, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health for Seniors.

Families are connected with First Link through a physician or other healthcare professional referral or by calling the toll-free First Link Dementia Helpline. First Link Coordinators work directly with families to identify which Alzheimer Society of B.C. programs and services, or services from other community partners, will meet their current needs and prepare them for the challenges ahead.

“The Province’s generous support will make it possible for the Alzheimer Society of B.C. to expand its First Link program, which helps connect British Columbians to dementia support services and education, preferably as soon as possible after a diagnosis. We thank the Ministry of Health for making First Link more accessible to the over 70,000 families in our province who face dementia.” says Maria Howard, CEO of the Alzheimer Society of B.C.

David Brown, a Vancouver resident living with dementia says “I have learned how to move from despair to acceptance, to focus on all that remains positive in my life, to be grateful for all the gifts and privileges life has brought to me. This outlook came to me through a First Link® referral to the Alzheimer Society of B.C. and, in particular, through the opportunity to be part of a group of men and women sharing how they carry on in their Alzheimer's world. It is a very significant gift to be part of this.”

By 2018, First Link will be available to residents in the Central Interior (Kamloops), the south and upper Fraser Valley (White Rock, Chilliwack, Abbotsford, Langley and Surrey), the South Okanagan and the Kootenays. First Link is currently available in: North Fraser, Greater Victoria, North and Central Okanagan, North and Central Vancouver Island, Northern Interior, Skeena, Peace Region, Richmond/South Delta, Vancouver and the North & Sunshine Coast.

British Columbians can call the First Link Dementia Helpline at 1-800-936-6033 to connect with the Alzheimer Society of B.C. and a province-wide network of Resource Centres, support services, education and information. Physicians and other healthcare professionals are able to connect people diagnosed with dementia by using the referral forms found at <http://www.alzheimerbc.org/We-Can-Help/First-Link.aspx>

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### **Media Contact**

Kevin Yip

Coordinator, Marketing & Communications  
Alzheimer Society of B.C.

Phone: 604-742-4936 | Cell: 604-818-0216

E-mail: [kyip@alzheimerbc.org](mailto:kyip@alzheimerbc.org)

Website: [www.alzheimerbc.org](http://www.alzheimerbc.org)

### **Photos available upon request**

#### **Interviews**

- Minister of Health Terry Lake
- Maria Howard, Alzheimer Society of B.C. Chief Executive Officer
- David Brown, Vancouver resident
- Eve Lyon, First Link referring professional

#### **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 authority on the disease in Canada.

## **Scotiabank Hockey for Alzheimer's**

Team up with NHL Alumni in the fight against Alzheimer's disease November 14–16, 2014. By participating in the *Scotiabank Hockey for Alzheimer's* tournament and supporting the Alzheimer Society of B.C., you help ensure that families on the dementia journey are not alone. Visit <http://hockeyforalzheimers.ca/> for details.



ALZHEIMER SOCIETY OF B.C.  
300 - 828 West 8th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Z 1E2  
PHONE: 604-681-6530 FAX: 604-669-6907 TOLL FREE: 1-800-667-3742  
WEBSITE: [www.alzheimerbc.org](http://www.alzheimerbc.org) E-MAIL: [info@alzheimerbc.org](mailto:info@alzheimerbc.org)  
CHARITABLE REGISTRATION BN #11878 4891 RR0001