



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, January 26, 2015

**Municipalities of New Westminster and Valemount set to become
B.C.'s first dementia-friendly councils**

New Westminster and Valemount, B.C. — The City of New Westminster and the Village of Valemount, B.C. have become B.C.'s first dementia-friendly councils. Councilors from the City of New Westminster participated in Dementia Friends training hours before councilors in Valemount did the training.

“We are working with municipalities, professionals, corporations and volunteers to better support people with dementia through our Dementia-Friendly Communities initiative, and we are thrilled that these two municipalities have received our dementia training,” says Maria Howard, CEO of the Alzheimer Society of B.C.

Sixty per cent of people with dementia live in the community by themselves or with a caregiver. Although many people with dementia live well in the community for quite a long time, staying engaged in the activities a person once enjoyed can become more difficult as their cognitive abilities change. Meanwhile, stigma, as well as social and physical barriers, can make it harder for people with dementia to feel supported and remain involved in their communities.

People with dementia often face challenges when going shopping, doing their banking, eating out at a restaurant or going to their local post office. They may also have difficulties using transportation, going on holidays, maintaining social contact or enjoying hobbies out in the community.

However, with information, compassion and community engagement, there is an opportunity to change this. The Dementia Friends education and training offered by the Alzheimer Society of B.C. will help everyone to take part in creating accessible, inclusive spaces for people with dementia.

“Given the aging of the population, issues related to dementia will become increasingly important. The City of New Westminster is committed to planning for people with dementia and ensuring that they can meet their varied needs and be an integral part of the community. To this end, Council is receiving training and staff will be developing a dementia-friendly community action plan with funding support from the province,” says the Mayor of New Westminster, Jonathan Coté.

In December 2014 the City of New Westminster learned it had been successful in its application to the Union of B.C. Municipalities, Local Government Program. The city was approved for \$20,000 to build on their Age-Friendly Community work by developing a Dementia-Friendly Community Action

Plan. The city will continue its work with the Alzheimer Society of B.C. to make the City of New Westminster an age and ability friendly community that adapts its structures and services to be accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capacities. Since 2007, the City has undertaken a variety of projects to work toward becoming age friendly, including implementing an Adaptable Housing Policy and Bylaw, their Age Friendly Business Initiative, their Century House Inclusion Project and completing the Wheelability Assessment Project.

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Interviews and photos available upon request.

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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.



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