

Alzheimer *Society*

2015 Advocacy Toolkit

Alzheimer Society

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Introduction and background

Join the movement

Canadians will go to the polls in a federal election on October 19, 2015. This election provides a timely opportunity for people impacted by dementia to get on the political radar screen.

Reaching out to candidates will help open a dialogue and build a relationship for working together with Members of Parliament after the election.

Opportunities to meet and greet candidates can be planned or spontaneous – such as attending an all candidates' debate, running into a candidate at the local coffee shop or meeting them when they show up at your front door.

It's good to be prepared for whatever opportunity arises so that you can share a compelling story about your experience with dementia and explain why Canada needs a national dementia strategy.

Use this toolkit to ensure that dementia is on the national health-care agenda as Canadians choose their federal representatives. It contains all of the information that you will need to get involved.

Background

Alzheimer's disease and other dementias represent a significant challenge for this country as our population continues to age. Currently there are 747,000 Canadians living with dementia, but that number is expected to grow to 1.4 million by the end of 2031. More importantly, the impact of dementia can be overwhelming for individuals and families. Canada needs a national dementia strategy to help curb the social, economic and personal costs of this disease and to better prepare ourselves for the future.

Our public policy goal

The scale, impact and cost of dementia are so significant that no single province or organization can tackle it alone. We need a coordinated effort involving federal and provincial governments.

Such a national approach could become a reality if the Government of Canada supports the Canadian Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Partnership (CADDP). The Alzheimer Society has developed a comprehensive plan for a national dementia strategy.

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This strategy will be built on the collective vision, expertise and firsthand experience of dementia experts, governments, researchers, health-care providers, industry, consumer groups as well as people living with dementia and their families.

Help us champion a national dementia strategy by getting involved. The collective voice of Canadians impacted by dementia needs to be heard this coming October.

Key messages

Key messages form the foundation of all communication with government. For the Alzheimer Society of Canada, the relevant messages include:

1. Dementia is a debilitating disease which results in a decline in mental ability. Memory loss is an example. There is no cure.
2. Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia.
3. Dementia affects 747,000 Canadians. That number will double in 16 years.
4. In 2014, the federal government made a commitment to dementia.
5. People with dementia can live well with the right care and support in place.
6. We need your support for a coordinated national dementia strategy to meet the growing dementia challenge.

Questions to ask candidates

Q: If elected, will your government commit to supporting the Canadian Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Partnership – a national strategy which has been proposed by the Alzheimer Society of Canada?

747,000 Canadians are currently living with dementia. Faced with an aging population, this number will double in the next 16 years, and the annual associated costs will drastically rise from \$33 billion to \$293 billion by 2040. A national dementia strategy can make a real difference.

Q: If elected as the Member of Parliament for our riding, will you commit to supporting Canada's promise to fund research into finding a cure for dementia?

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Canada promised to fund research towards finding a cure for dementia as declared at the G8 Summit on Dementia in 2013. By co-ordinating dementia research investments nationally and internationally, the Canadian Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Partnership would maximize research efforts towards finding a cure and improving quality of life for people with dementia.

Q: If elected as the Member of Parliament for our riding, will you commit to becoming a Dementia Friend?

An important priority of the Canadian Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Partnership is to promote broader public awareness of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias as well as combat stigma. Dementia Friends Canada is a national awareness and public engagement initiative to better inform Canadians about dementia and turn that understanding into actions to help fellow Canadians with this disease.

Q: If elected as the Member of Parliament for our riding, will you support non-taxable payments for caregivers?

The federal government introduced tax benefits for caregivers – these are non-refundable credits that apply to your income tax return. This tax scheme may not benefit low-income taxpayers or provide sustainable support over time. We would prefer to see caregiver benefits be non-taxable payments – similar to child care cheques.

Appendix A: Request for candidate support (sample letter)

(please see next page)

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Date

Dear (Candidate name),

My name is (Your name) and dementia has had a significant impact on my life. (Provide a descriptive explanation about how dementia has impacted you personally. For example, are you a person living with dementia and if so, for how long? Provide 1-2 specific examples of how living with dementia has impacted you.). This is why Canada needs a national dementia strategy.

As (a person living with dementia, a caregiver for a person living with dementia or other (please be specific)), this issue is especially important to me. I believe that immediate attention and a strong concerted effort is required from the federal and provincial governments to address the burden dementia places on our economy, individuals with the disease, their families, and our health-care system.

Dementia has a significant social and economic impact for all Canadians. According to the Alzheimer Society, the number of Canadians living with dementia will increase from 747,000 today, to 1.4 million by 2031, while the combined direct and indirect costs of the disease will skyrocket from \$33 billion per year to \$293 billion per year by 2040.

The Alzheimer Society has proposed the creation of the Canadian Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Partnership (CADDP) to implement a national dementia strategy for Canada. As we approach the upcoming election, I would appreciate your support of this strategy.

For more information and to pledge your support, visit: alzheimer.ca/election2015

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours truly,

(Your name)

