



e-Newsletter

SeniorsBC.ca

Message from Parliamentary Secretary Michelle Stilwell



Autumn is almost upon us, bringing the promise of changing leaves and the pleasures of a bountiful harvest. It's definitely one of my favourite times of year – perfect for making delicious soups for my family and enjoying the crisp, sunny days together.

Fall is a time of transition, giving us the chance to catch our breath after busy summer and turn our attention from barbecues and vacations to other matters. One of the things I am focused on now is dementia and its effect on both sufferers and their families and caregivers in our province.

September was World Alzheimer's Month, when I learned the sobering fact that approximately 70,000 British Columbians have Alzheimer's or a related form of dementia.

With B.C.'s growing and aging population, our government is working to meet the related health care challenges, which include diseases like dementia that affects one in 20 people over the age of 65 and one in four over the age of 85. People can also develop early onset dementia before the age of 65.

We are committed to ensuring those with dementia and their families have access to early diagnosis, treatment and support. We know that people are happiest in their home and we are committed to providing home health services so people with dementia can live in their community safely for as long as possible. We are also committed to providing access to residential care when necessary that is designed to better meet the needs of those with dementia.

An Alzheimer's diagnosis can be stressful and overwhelming for all involved - the person with the disease as well as family and friends. They should know that in such times, there are supports in place to help.

In 2012, our government announced the Provincial Dementia Action Plan, which sets out goals to help people with dementia and their families to access quality care and services, from prevention through to the end of life. This also includes guidelines to support health care providers and other caregivers by giving them access to reliable tools and resources to assess persons who have the symptoms of dementia. More information on the 2012 Dementia Action Plan can be found by visiting:

www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2012/dementia-action-plan.pdf

The Province is in the process of refreshing the plan to identify areas we can improve upon based on a review of national and international best practices.

Our government has also partnered with the Alzheimer Society of B.C. and has invested \$6 million to support First Link. This program offers customized information and access to services as soon as possible after diagnosis. As well, a \$7.5 million fund was recently announced which will further British Columbia's research into Alzheimer's. Funding was provided by the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research, Genome British Columbia, the Pacific Alzheimer Research Foundation and Brain Canada.

I also want to thank the health professionals who provide the high-quality care to those in need. It is comforting to know our province has so many dedicated caregivers, which also provides a level of comfort for loved ones of those with dementia.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Stilwell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michelle Stilwell

Parliamentary Secretary for Healthy Living and Seniors to the Minister of Health