

STATEMENT TO THE LEGISLATURE
BY THE HONOURABLE MARIO SERGIO
MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR SENIORS
ON "FINDING YOUR WAY"

QUEEN'S PARK
TORONTO, ONTARIO

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

- Mr. Speaker:
 - As part of our government's Action Plan for Seniors, we've set up a wandering prevention program to help people with Alzheimer disease and related dementias -- and their families and caregivers from our diverse communities -- to reduce the risk of going missing.
 - The Government of Ontario is proud to join the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, police forces, community representatives and government ministries – in an integrated response to a growing challenge – improving safety awareness and preventing missing incidents among individuals with dementia, many of whom are seniors.
 - "*Finding Your Way*" is a new program to help people with dementia who may wander and become lost, while supporting caregivers and communities -- the first of its kind in Canada.
 - It's aimed at helping to save them from harm and potentially life-threatening dangers.
 - With the increase in the number of people with dementia, and their preference to live in the community as long as possible, we've recognized the importance of having a program in place.
 - Seniors, caregivers, the general public – every one of us – has an obligation to do our part to ensure the safety and security of people with dementia who wander.
 - The time for "Finding Your Way" is now.

- The number of people with dementia is growing as never before – and will increase 40 per cent in less than a decade – from 180,000 to more than a quarter of a million people.
- Indeed, this is closely linked to the fact that in just five years, there will be more seniors in Ontario than children 14 and younger.
- While the likelihood of developing dementia increases with age, we also know that more people are being diagnosed with early-onset dementia at younger ages.
- *Finding Your Way* will improve safety as we educate, involve and empower seniors, their families, caregivers and people throughout the province.
- We will equip people with information and support so that they can plan for the future in a way that maximizes choice, independence and safety.
- The program will help us all work together – the entire community – to become aware of the signs when encountering persons with dementia and other related illnesses who are lost or missing.
- With the Alzheimer Society of Ontario and the police, we are developing:
 - resources for individuals and families to prevent loved ones from going missing;
 - public education to raise awareness;
 - outreach to communities, with an emphasis on diversity;
 - training for front-line police officers to recognize and respond to cases involving seniors who have wandered;
- The Alzheimer Society will provide tips on what to do when a person goes missing, as well as identification kits that encourage people to document vital statistics and include photographs of their loved ones **before** they go missing.
- The Society, with its history of dealing with this issue, is leading the public awareness campaign.

- It will include a broad range of media organizations, engagement with communities, and partnering with ethno-cultural organizations to extend our information outreach.
- In particular, the campaign will begin with resources in English, French, Chinese, and Punjabi, and expand by introducing resources in Italian, Spanish and Portuguese in 2014.
- We want everybody, young and old, to know and be aware of wandering risks, so that the community responds to help missing seniors.
- Public safety is our collective concern and shared responsibility.
- We must recognize and reduce the risk of going missing.
- This program is a good start and I commend everyone involved in it.
- Thank you, Mr. Speaker.