



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ontario Taking Action to Protect People with Dementia

Alzheimer's safety campaign a step in the right direction

TORONTO, March 20, 2013 – The new Ontario Government, in partnership with the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, is launching a groundbreaking multicultural safety awareness program for people with dementia who may go missing. ***Finding Your Way***, a new wandering prevention program funded by the Ontario Government, will help prevent people with dementia from “wandering” and going missing, and also help caregivers and other family members prepare for such incidents, if they occur.

Nearly 200,000 Ontarians have dementia, an increase of 16 percent over the past four years. By 2020, nearly 250,000 seniors in this province will be living with some form of dementia.¹ Statistics show that three out of five people with dementia go missing at some point, often without warning. There is greater risk of injury, even death, for those missing for more than 24 hours. Having a plan in place and knowing how to protect the individual is a must for caregivers.

The ***Finding Your Way*** safety kit contains information to help families create personalized safety plans. The kit includes:

- **An identification kit with space for a recent photo and physical description that can be shared with police in an emergency**
- **At-home safety steps to help prevent missing incidents from occurring**
- **Steps to safeguard a person with dementia, such as using the Alzheimer Society of Canada's MedicAlert® Safely Home® program**
- **Tips on what to do when a person with dementia goes missing and when reuniting after a wandering incident**
- **The latest information on locating devices**

Ontario is also providing funding for the Ontario Police College to develop and deliver police training that incorporates wandering prevention into the current police curriculum.

“We see the number of people with dementia and the risks associated with missing incidents rising,” says Gale Carey, CEO of the Alzheimer Society of Ontario. “We commend the Ontario government for recognizing the need for ***Finding Your Way***. And because we know dementia doesn't discriminate, we're launching this public service campaign not only in English and in French, but also in Mandarin, Cantonese and Punjabi. Our multilingual public service announcements on television, radio, in print and on-line offer valuable tips to keep people with dementia safe.”

“Finding Your Way is part of Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors, we are working to enable Ontario seniors to be healthier, providing them with friendly, supportive communities, and keeping them protected and safe, while

recognizing that supporting seniors means supporting their families and caregivers,” Mario Sergio, Minister Responsible for Seniors.

“Our goal is to ensure the safety of all the people of Ontario. By providing the training that helps police officers respond to cases of seniors who have wandered, we are working to protect our vulnerable seniors and keep them safe,” Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

“When people with dementia go missing, the police view it as an emergency. Time is a factor, and the identification information contained within the Finding Your Way kits is exactly the kind of information that police need to speed up the search process. The Finding Your Way kits are a great tool families can have on hand to assist police when searching with a loved one with dementia,” Brent Thomlison, Deputy Chief, Operations, Waterloo Regional Police Services, representing the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP).

Keith Harvey of Mississauga knows the value of a program like **Finding Your Way**. “Four years ago my wife Mary, who had dementia, left our cottage in Gravenhurst in the middle of the night. I had been waking myself up every 30 minutes to check on her, but she slipped out anyway. I eventually found her walking along the dark road in her pyjamas. The **Finding Your Way** safety kit would have helped me understand how to safely plan and prevent her from wandering. I would advise any caregiver to connect with their local Alzheimer Society to obtain a safety kit.”

To learn more about *Finding Your Way*, visit www.findingyourwayontario.ca or contact your local Alzheimer Society at www.alzheimerontario.ca.

1. R. Hopkins, Geriatric Psychiatry Programme, Clinical/Research Bulletin, Number 16, 2010

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About Ontario Seniors' Secretariat

The Ontario Senior's Secretariat works to improve the quality of life for Ontario's seniors by:

- Developing policies and programs that meet the needs of seniors and help them lead Active, healthy and dignified lives.
- Advising on the development of policies and programs across government on behalf of seniors.
- Providing seniors with the information they need about vital programs and services, health lifestyles and aging.
- Promoting the important contributions seniors make to families, communities and the province of Ontario.
- Maintaining close working relationships with seniors' organizations across the province.

For more information about Secretariat of Seniors Ontario visit www.ontario.ca/seniors

About the Alzheimer Society of Ontario

The Alzheimer Society of Ontario is the province's leading health charity committed to helping people with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. With a network of 38 Societies across Ontario, we offer **Help for Today** through our programs and services for people living with dementia and **Hope for Tomorrow...**[®] by funding research to find the cause and the cure.

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