

Champlain Public Policy Committee (CPPC)
[Alzheimer Society of Ottawa and Renfrew County (ASORC) &
Champlain Dementia Network (CDN)]

PRIORITY: EARLY DIAGNOSIS AND INTERVENTION

The Issue	The need for early diagnosis and intervention to improve the quality of life for those with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias while decreasing the costs to the health system.
The Background:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dementia is the leading cause of disability in those over 60 years. • More than 160,000 Ontarians live with dementia in 2009. In 2031, this will double to 320,000. • In the Champlain Region, there are about 16,000 people with dementia now. • Dementia care now is estimated to cost \$7 billion annually in Ontario -- slowing the onset and progression of dementia will produce substantial financial savings to society. • Projections are that over the next 25 years, dementia will prove to have the <u>highest</u> economic, social and health cost burden of all diseases in Canada (National Advisory Council on Aging [NACA], 2004). • Early diagnosis, together with improved intervention, has the potential to delay onset of major AD symptoms by five years or more. This would result in a decreased prevalence of 50%, saving billions of dollars in health and social spending (NACA, 2004). • Caregiver support programs result in a 1½ year delay for long term care placement (Mittelman, Nov 2006, Neurology).
The Analysis:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most Ontarians are unaware of the benefits of early diagnosis or of ways to lessen their risks of the disease. • There is a profound shortage of primary care providers to recognize, diagnose and treat people with dementia. • There is a shortage of specialized diagnostic, assessment and intervention services to assist the primary care providers with difficult cases. The only specialized diagnostic clinic in the Champlain Region, the Memory Disorder Clinic in Ottawa, has long wait lists and no stable funding. • There is a shortage of patient/family/caregiver support services to assist families dealing with dementia.
The Recommendation:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Designate \$620,000 annual funding for the Memory Disorder Clinic in the Champlain Region, a specialized diagnostic service for those with dementia. 2. Develop a provincial strategy for early diagnosis and intervention to include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) a comprehensive public awareness campaign on brain health and the early diagnosis and intervention of dementia b) improved recognition, diagnosis and intervention of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias by providing increased numbers and support of appropriately trained primary care professionals c) increased family support and education for those with dementia, their families and caregivers e.g. First Link™ Program