What is dementia?
- The leading cause of disability in those over 60 years.
- Alzheimer’s disease is the most common form of dementia.
- It threatens to bankrupt Ontario’s health care system.
- Costs Ontario $7 billion a year. Projections are that over the next 25 years, dementia will prove to have the highest economic, social and health cost burden of all diseases in Canada (National Advisory Council on Aging [NACA], 2004).

Numbers affected by Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias?
- In the Champlain Region, there are currently over 14,000 people with some kind of dementia.
- In Ontario, more than 160,000 are living with dementia. By 2031, this number will have more than doubled.

What can you do?
The Alzheimer Societies in the Champlain Region (Eastern Counties, Ottawa and Renfrew County) and the Champlain Dementia Network are asking you — as our local Members of Provincial Parliament, our policy makers, to take action by supporting our regional priorities:
- Early Diagnosis and Intervention
- Respite Care Options
- Increased Staffing in Long Term Care Homes
FOCUS: The Need for Early Diagnosis and Intervention

The Background

- Early diagnosis, together with improved intervention, has the potential to delay onset of major Alzheimer’s disease 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 Recommendation

1. Develop a provincial strategy to include a comprehensive public awareness campaign on brain health.
2. Designated funding for the Memory Disorder Clinic.
3. Base funding for the First Link™ Program.

First Link™ Program: Recipient of Ontario Trillium Foundation Award

The First Link™ Program Coordinator contacts newly diagnosed persons and caregivers and provides ongoing information and support. It has shown that if people are given support throughout the progression of the disease, those with Alzheimer’s disease are likely to remain in the community longer.

I was just 58 years old …

“My name is CJ McCaffrey and I was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease in 2003, when I was just 58 years old. Are you aware that this disease can hide in your brain for about 5 to 10 years before it manifests symptoms? That it takes about 3 years after that to be able to be diagnosed, and about another 3 months to go through the testing. You do the math; I cannot any longer.

The doctor at the Memory Disorder Clinic*, told me that it was not down the road but it was here and now, and gave me some medication right there on the spot. I was invited to go into a Blind Study for a new medication that was in its 3rd round of testing and was then introduced to the special care and wonderful people at the Memory Disorder Clinic. They have given my hope back to me. I honestly don’t know what will happen to me if that place has to close.

I got in touch with the Alzheimer Society and my life improved almost immediately. Through their workshops, support group, and general caring, I began to learn more about this disease and how to help myself to prepare for what lies ahead.

We are told of a large increase in the seniors population that is coming up in the next few years … what will happen to them? I believe that the doctors need better training to diagnose this disease. I am living proof that you do not have to be in your 70’s or 80’s to get this disease.

The longer that you are able to help people stay in their homes and independent, the less it cost the Government in Health Care.”

* The Memory Disorder Clinic, a specialized diagnostic service for the early and complex cases of dementia, has no designated funding and is continually at risk of closure.