

Provincial government providing funding to help those living with dementia

Written By ALYSSA PARKHILL

On Dec 16, Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones announced a program in partnership with The Alzheimer Society of Ontario to provide safety precautions for those living with dementia and their families.

According to a release distributed by the provincial government, approximately 125,000 seniors who are living with dementia in Ontario are at risk of wandering out and possibly going missing. Roughly 60 per cent of those living with dementia go missing at one point, while 50 per cent of people who go missing for 24 hours risk serious injury. In 2018, approximately 7,500 people were reported missing.

The Ontario government is funding \$600,000 towards The Alzheimer Society of Ontario to provide the Finding Your Way program.

"This funding will go a long way in helping seniors, especially given an estimated 240,000 seniors in Ontario are living with dementia," said Raymond Cho, Minister for Seniors and Accessibility. "This is another example of how our government is putting seniors and their families first by making it easier to find our missing loved ones faster."

According to the new release by MPP Sylvia Jones, "Finding Your Way is a multicultural wandering prevention program which provides practical tools and advice for individuals, caregivers and the community to recognize and reduce the risk of someone with dementia wandering and going missing, while supporting a quick, safe return should an incident occur."

The Alzheimer Society of Dufferin will receive \$5,000 to work with the community and organizations to provide education and awareness to the risks those living dementia.

"I am pleased that the funding given to the Alzheimer Society of Dufferin County is being used to help keep seniors safe," said Jones. "We have a great community support network between the Alzheimer Society and first responders and organizations who may encounter vulnerable seniors. The programs and resources available ensure that there is help for seniors in their home and in our community."

The program provides a variety of resources to those living with dementia, as well as families and caregivers. University of Alberta PhD Candidate Noelannah Neubauer developed an easy and simple set of guidelines that provides communities with proactive tips and strategies to reduce the risks of those living with dementia going missing. These guidelines were put together with the help of first responders, caregivers, health-care professionals, social works, communities, Alzheimer Societies and people living with dementia.

Funds will also be put into group events and seminars for individuals, caregivers and families, support workers and first responders such as police officers and paramedics.

"The Finding Your Way funding Alzheimer Dufferin has received from the Province of Ontario, has enabled our team to further educate our local stakeholders on how to support persons with dementia who are lost in our community," said Lindsay Butcher, Executive Director of Alzheimer Society of Dufferin County. "Finding Your Way also helps to raise awareness of Alzheimer's disease and related dementia's, how to become familiarized with the signs of someone suffering from the disease and how to navigate them through those difficult situations."

If you are aware of a family member, friend or neighbour who lives with dementia and is at risk of wandering, contact the Alzheimer Society of Dufferin County for more information at Alzheimer.ca/dufferincounty or learn more about the Finding Your Way program at findingyourwayontario.ca.