

## **Alzheimer Society of Ontario Welcomes Another Promising Treatment for Alzheimer's Disease**

*Multiple Treatment Options for Alzheimer's Disease May Soon be Available, but Ontario is Still Not Ready*

**Toronto, ON, May 3, 2023**—The Alzheimer Society of Ontario is expressing measured excitement and optimism today following release of positive phase three clinical trial results for donanemab, a drug developed by Eli Lilly to slow progression of Alzheimer's disease at early stages. This news is giving hope to hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who are at heightened risk of developing Alzheimer's disease that there could soon be multiple treatment options approved for use in Canada.

"Alzheimer's disease is fatal, and there is no cure. The United States has two approved treatments to slow progression of the disease, but currently Canada has none," explains Cathy Barrick, CEO of the Alzheimer Society of Ontario. "Today's positive results give us hope that this may soon change. Our federal and provincial governments must get to work immediately to prepare for the arrival of new treatment options for Alzheimer's disease. As things stand today, Ontario would not be able to introduce a treatment for Alzheimer's disease even if one were approved. In the very near future, this lack of preparation and foresight will cost lives."

In 2022, the Alzheimer Society of Ontario sponsored research out of the University of Southern California that found the introduction of a disease-modifying therapy for Alzheimer's disease in Ontario could save the province \$9.9 billion over 20 years in avoided hospital and long-term care costs. That same study also found that Ontario is not ready for the arrival of a treatment: with current diagnostic capacity, Ontarians will be waiting seven and a half years to get diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease by the end of the decade. That is longer than many will live—and years too long to be able to make effective use of emerging treatments.

"Today's results strongly suggest that donanemab must be administered early in disease progression to be effective. This is also the case for both treatments currently approved for use in the United States," continued Ms. Barrick. "That means if and when these treatments become available in Canada, we will have to fundamentally and radically rethink how we detect and diagnose Alzheimer's disease."

Currently most people living with any form of dementia in Ontario do not actually have a confirmed diagnosis, just a probable one. That won't be good enough in the near future: treatment options will be costly and come with potentially fatal side effects. To administer them, there must be near-absolute certainty that someone actually has Alzheimer's disease. That will involve much earlier detection at the primary care level, tens of thousands of additional MRI and PET scans, lumbar punctures, and hundreds of additional specialists to interpret the results from all of these tests.

Donanemab, like all drugs, is anticipated to have associated side effects—some of which could potentially be fatal. Today’s clinical trial results have not yet been peer reviewed or published in full, and should be interpreted with some caution. Donanemab has not yet been approved for use in any jurisdiction. The Alzheimer Society stands fully behind Health Canada’s independent review process, and encourages anyone with questions about options for their specific situation to contact their doctor and their local Alzheimer Society:  
<https://alzheimer.ca/on/en/about-us/find-your-local-alzheimer-society>

“Today Ontarians affected by dementia are feeling encouraged and optimistic,” said Ms. Barrick. “That will quickly turn to despair and anger when they realize treatments are approved that could change their lives—but their government wasn’t ready in time. Ontario’s lack of readiness for what is coming cannot be overemphasized.”

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### **About the Alzheimer Society of Ontario**

The Alzheimer Society is a federation of 26 frontline community support service providers, operating in every community across Ontario. We supported over 95,000 clients last year, including both care partners and people living with dementia. We provide education and training to physicians and other health care professionals, as well as to the general public, and work to reduce the stigma that is far too often associated with dementia. As a health service provider, we offer system navigation, care partner respite, adult day programs, therapeutic recreation, and so much more at little or, for nearly all of our programs, no cost to families. With hundreds of staff and thousands of volunteers we seek to alleviate the personal and social consequences of Alzheimer’s disease and other types of dementia, and to promote research into a cure.

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**Alzheimer Society of Ontario staff are available for media interviews in English and French.**