

# CanAge Connections

CanAge is Canada's national advocacy organization for older adults. We work to advance the rights and well-being of Canadians as we age in order to live vibrant and connected lives. This is the January 2021 edition of our monthly newsletter 'CanAge Connections'. Happy New Year!

## January is Alzheimer's Awareness Month



Alzheimer's disease is a chronic, degenerative, irreversible disease that kills brain cells and deteriorates memory. In Canada, the number of older adults living with Alzheimer's or another form of dementia is about 500,000. The cost of caring for Canadians with dementia - most of whom are women - exceeds \$10 billion.

There are many tools available to help spread awareness of Alzheimer's, including sharing key messages on social media. This will all help to increase awareness and understanding of this very difficult disease.

**TAKE ACTION**



### Learn

Misconceptions are often at the root of stigma. Learn about communication, behaviour, safety and more.



### Connect

Find out what's going on at your local Alzheimer Society, including how your local Society helps your community and how you can get involved.

### Share

Spread word on social media and in your community. Use the materials found in the Alzheimer's Awareness Month toolkit, available at [ilivewithdementia.ca](http://ilivewithdementia.ca).

### Alzheimer's Awareness Month Webinar

January 27, 2pm-3pm PST

**Dementia and long-term care in the time of COVID-19.** As part of Alzheimer's Awareness month, join a conversation between advocates and experts on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people living with dementia in LTC. Register at [Alzbc.org/webinars](http://Alzbc.org/webinars).



Source: Alzheimer's Society

### Join a Digital Literacy Club!

Alzheimer's Society of Toronto Digital Literacy Clubs explore and explain relevant technology topics to help care partners shift to online/virtual health services and resources. This program builds comfort and confidence in using technology for access and participation in current and future online/virtual health care services for care partners of people living with dementia. Several dates available starting January 7, 2021. Learn more.





# Government Relations

## Advocacy in Action

In VOICES of Canada's Seniors: A Roadmap for an Age-Inclusive Canada we talk about how this pandemic has shown us that by working together great change is possible.

### Bill Submission

One of the ways that CanAge helps to effect change is by keeping track of the various bills that are put forward in provincial, territorial and federal legislatures.

In November, CanAge was invited to make a submission at the second reading of Ontario's Bill 3 "Compassionate Care Act, 2020" about Hospice Palliative Care. The purpose of the Act is to develop a framework to ensure that every Ontarian has access to quality palliative care.

Our submission referred to the letter "O - Optimal Health and Wellness" and the letter "C - Caregiving, Long-term Care and Housing Resources" in VOICES. We defined the issues (#14 - Hospice, Palliative and End-of-life and #26 - Home Care) and made eight recommendations (#44-47 and #91-93).

Then we answered questions from the Standing Committee which was made up of the representatives from all parties in the Ontario legislature. Once we and other submissions were made, the Standing Committee then met and made some amendments to the Bill and it was sent back for third reading. After the reading, there was a debate and then a vote. As a result, Bill 3 received Royal Assent on December 2, 2020.



### Federal Fall Economic Statement

On December 2, the Federal Government issued their Fall Economic Statement. In it, several items that were recommendations in VOICES were directly referenced.



- The government's largest investment for long-term care in Canadian history includes new national standards and a \$1 billion Safe Long-term Care Fund to help with Covid-19 response;
- A \$38.5 million investment over two years to train 4,000 personal support workers and address staffing shortages;
- A \$1 million investment to work with third parties and conduct readiness assessments and training on infection prevention and control; and
- Prioritizing healthcare workers seeking asylum to provide a pathway to permanent residency.

# World Braille Day



Source: Photosensitive Braille - Equality

## Celebrate on January 4, 2021!

Three years ago the UN General Assembly declared January 4th as World Braille Day. Braille is a tactile representation of alphabetic, numerical, musical, scientific and mathematical symbols using six dots to represent each letter and number. Invented by Louis Braille, who lost his eyesight after an accident with an awl infected his eyes, it is used by fewer and fewer people; less than 10% of Canada's estimated 830,000 visually impaired people read braille.



Visit [braillebug.org](http://braillebug.org) to see your name in braille.

Advancements in technology have lessened the interest in tactile reading, but according to the vision loss community, it is an essential literacy tool. Think restaurant menus, elevator buttons, and room numbers. Software can't help with that.

CanAge advocates for increased funding for major eye diseases in the Optimal Health section of our VOICES of Canada's Seniors: A Roadmap to an Age-Inclusive Canada platform.



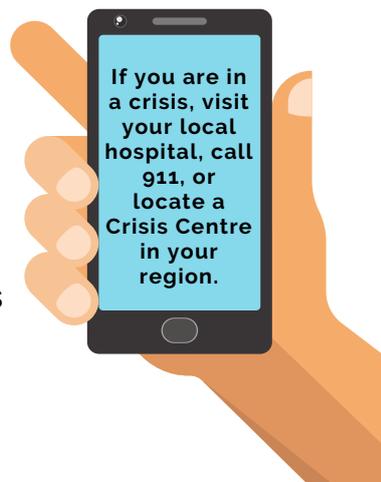
## Bell Let's Talk Day

Join the Conversation on January 28, 2021

Canada is in the grips of a mental health crisis, and COVID isn't helping. We are all overwhelmed in the same and different ways; for some, the result is crippling depression and anxiety that threatens lives, ruins health and hurts families. It is a disease like any other and help is available. CanAge is advocating for de-stigmatization, research, screening and other supports for mental illness and substance abuse in our VOICES platform.

On January 28, money will be donated to mental health funds based on the number of social media and communication "interactions" made with the branded hashtag, #BellLetsTalk.

Bell Let's Talk has raised millions of dollars for treatment of and research into mental illness; do your part and use their toolkit.



## In the News

CanAge is the go-to organization when journalists seek comment about the issues affecting older Canadians. Here are some recent highlights.

### The Philanthropist

Long-term care and second-wave isolation. With the second wave in full swing and winter on its way, seniors, especially those in long-term care (LTC), face a "retreat into isolation," according to a recent article in Maclean's. Laura Tamblyn Watts, CEO of CanAge, fears for their well-being.

[Read more at CanAge.ca/media](http://CanAge.ca/media)

### Global News

How COVID-19 has changed the way families think about long-term care in Ontario. Tamblyn Watts said it's important to limit general visits into nursing homes to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus, but that essential family caregivers should be allowed into facilities and provided with the proper personal protective equipment (PPE), training and support.

[Read more at CanAge.ca/media](http://CanAge.ca/media)

For full media coverage visit [CanAge.ca/media](http://CanAge.ca/media)

# My Lived Experience with Dementia

## Interview with Christine Thelker

CanAge Policy Officer Brett Book sat down (virtually) with Christine Thelker, advocate, author, student, dementia defier.



Source: Chrissy's Journey

**Please tell us what prompted you to go to the doctor when you first experienced symptoms of dementia.**

Looking back there were likely years of events that led to the eventual diagnosis, but for a few years prior I was tested for MS and other things; no one was thinking of dementia, but no one was connecting my vascular issues with the events (stroke-like that kept me arriving in the ER).

That is until I did have a TIA (small stroke) while working which had me in the hospital and then undergoing tests for the next couple of years until the firm diagnosis of vascular dementia came to be.

I believe part of the reason for the delays was that doctors don't think or want to think about dementia in a younger person so they look for all other explanations first. But I would blank out, by that I mean suddenly mid-sentence be staring vacantly, losing words, struggling with regular tasks.

**How did you feel in the days and weeks after being diagnosed?**

I would say I was numb, completely devastated, lost.

“  
**Sometimes getting all the pieces to go together can be like a treasure hunt, which can bring moments of total delight.**  
 ”

**What has surprised you the most about vascular dementia?**

I think for me it's the unpredictability of it, never knowing from one day or one hour what or how symptoms will present, and how some of the symptoms you would likely not expect to relate to dementia or especially vascular dementia.

**In other interviews, you speak about both laughter and tears. What could possibly be funny about living with dementia?**

For me, it's about learning to forgive yourself for things that you do wrong or can no longer do, it's about learning to laugh at myself, and the mistakes I make now. It does provide a sense of freedom if you will. I totally live in the moment, all of the life restraints most live under, are no longer of any importance or interest to me. Laughing at living my life as though it's a live jigsaw puzzle or maze that I have to try to navigate every day and sometimes getting all the pieces to go together can be like a treasure hunt, which can bring moments of total delight.

**What made you decide to be an advocate?**

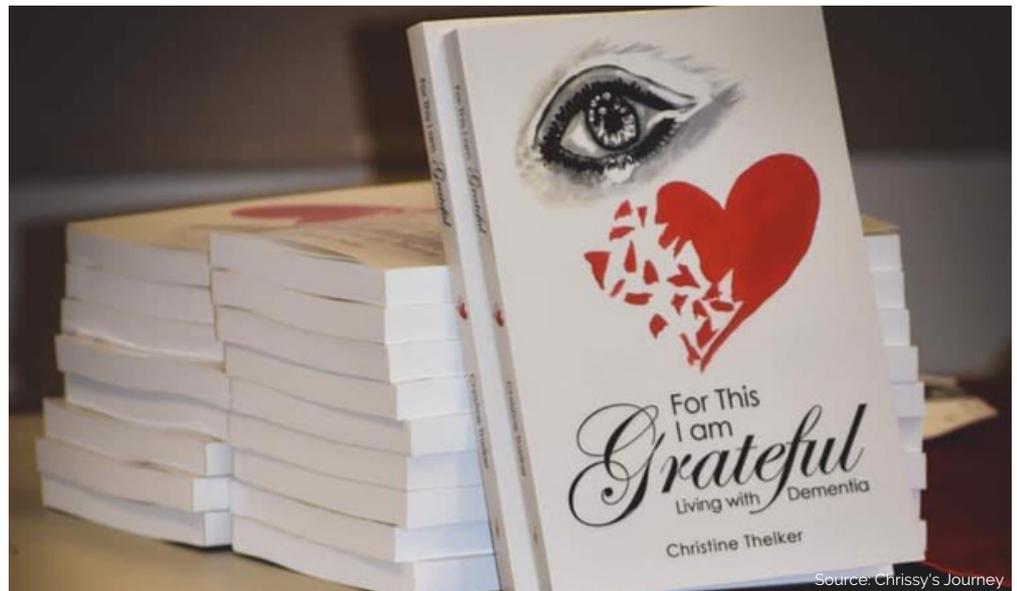
The simple answer is that I have said since the day of my diagnosis that if I had to live with this illness it couldn't be for anything.

“  
 You have to get busy living or or get busy dying. I have chosen to get busy living.  
 ”

### How have your advocacy initiatives been received?

So far, it has been remarkably good. I have spoken at the United Nations in New York at the 12th annual Convention on Rights for Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). I presented twice in December at the Alzheimer's Disease International Convention, which was to be in Singapore but is now changed to an online event.

I work with research groups here in Canada, and globally, on initiatives that impact those living with dementia. So I feel I am doing my very best to bring awareness, and bring positive change for people living with dementia. I am happy, I am content, I am busy, I have found a lot of happiness living in the now, and learning that you have to get busy living or or get busy dying. I have chosen to get busy living.



### You were diagnosed five years ago. How has the disease progressed: do you feel the same today as you did then?

I believe through nutrition and exercise, I have been helping slow the progression but this last year has seen an increase in decreased abilities. I felt devastated when diagnosed, thought all I could do was get ready to die; today, I no longer feel that way, although I am aware I am a ticking time bomb so to speak.

### You seem to be a very optimistic person. What do you think the next five years look like?

Well, I first have to get through the COVID-19 pandemic! My health leaves me very vulnerable, so I live in a bubble of one at this time, because I am determined to come out the other side of this. I don't look very far down the road, actually, but I told my doctor last fall that I need his help to get another couple of years because there are things I want to do and complete.

His response was “let's try for a couple beyond that.” At the time neither of us saw or expected the decline we are now seeing. So I will live day by day, and if granted the years I will continue to try to make a difference for others.

### Tell us about your book.

My book is called “For this I am Grateful”, this is a very personal and raw book about my journey with dementia. It was written in the moment, which provides a real glimpse into the day to day life of someone with dementia.



It also provides hope, and we all need hope. My dementia may be a terminal illness, and it may have brought a lot of loss, but it also gave back in unimaginable beautiful ways, that's what I am so grateful for. That is the essence of my book.

Thank you Christine for taking the time to talk to us! Follow Christine's adventures at [ChrissysJourney.com](http://ChrissysJourney.com).

# CanAge Conversations

## CanAge Champion for Change

Laura Tamblyn Watts, CanAge CEO, spoke with Jane Barratt, Ph.D. the Secretary-General of the International Federation on Ageing (IFA) and Greg Shaw, also with the International Federation on Ageing as Director of International and Corporate Relations.



Secretary General, IFA  
**Jane Barratt, Ph.D**



Two positive, engaging, and encouraging people with amazing stories to share with the CanAge audience. Don't miss these episodes. You can watch them on our YouTube channel! [CanAge.ca/youtube](https://www.canage.ca/youtube).



Director of International & Corporate Relations, IFA  
**Greg Shaw**

## Stay tuned...

### Let's Talk about Anti-Black Racism and Discrimination in Nursing - January 18, 6:45pm - 8:15pm

This is a monthly webinar series designed for members of the public interested in receiving updates on RNAO's Black Nurses Task Force. [Learn more online.](#)

### Family Literacy Day - January 28

Toronto Public Library (and others across the country) offers reading lists, resources and challenges all month long! [Learn more online.](#)



 **Partnership Inquiries:**  
[partnerships@canage.ca](mailto:partnerships@canage.ca)

Did you know that [digital library cards](#) are now available?

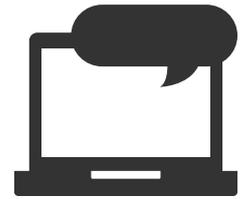
# CanAge WINTER WELLNESS

## Welcome to CanAge's Winter Wellness Wonderland

[CanAge's Winter Wellness Wonderland](#) offers winter and year-long virtual events to keep you entertained, educated, and connected while isolating with your loved ones. From coast-to-coast-to-coast, we found aquariums, art galleries, museums, and concerts and all for free! Go to [www.canage.ca/wellness](https://www.canage.ca/wellness).



# You Asked, We Answered



**Q.** I just learned that a “living will” is not legal in Canada. Is that true?

**A.** That’s correct. The term “living will” has no legal standing in Canada. If you want to communicate your emergency and end-of-life wishes, they must be recorded correctly. Across Canada the names of these documents vary, and include “advance care directive”, a “power of attorney for personal care”, or a “representation agreement”. Decisions about your care are deeply personal and unique to you; we strongly advise that you seek legal advice before putting pen to paper.

Have a question for CanAge? Submit it via [newsletter@CanAge.ca](mailto:newsletter@CanAge.ca).



## Mental Capacity and Powers of Attorney:

What You Need to Know Both Personally and Professionally



With support from The Law Foundation of Ontario, and University of Toronto, Factor-Inwentash School of Social Work, Institute for Life Course and Aging, CanAge has launched the Power of Attorney webinar series!

The series, How to Be a Power of Attorney in Ontario, is available on our Youtube channel. Watch the [first episode](#) now at [Canage.ca/Youtube](https://Canage.ca/Youtube).

**8 in 10**

Canadians have given end-of-life care some thought but less than

**1 in 5**

has an advanced care plan.

Source: Speak Up Canada

It's not always easy to have conversations with others about your wishes for care at the end of life. But if you don't have an advance care plan, someone else will make your decisions for you.

Although not legal binding, advance care planning offers people the opportunity to plan and communicate their wishes. [Speak Up Canada](#) provides printable and digital workbooks that walk you through the five steps of advance care planning.

It also provides a card with your substitute decision maker’s contact information that you can keep in your wallet.

## FREE 1 Year CanAge Membership

We’d love to have you join CanAge for **FREE for 1 year**. You can become a member of CanAge at **NO COST** to you.

We are currently building a robust portfolio of benefit partners for CanAge members. We want to learn what you’d like us to provide in terms of membership discounts and opportunities, custom-curated experiences, and of course what issues are important to you, that we should advocate for.

If you would like to be part of our CanAge Community, participating in online events, online surveys, and polls, as well as other CanAge initiatives, then take advantage of this founding membership offer. We’d love to have you be part of CanAge.

Visit [CanAge.ca/join](https://CanAge.ca/join) to

**Join Us!**