



The Ontario Caregiver Coalition is the voice of Ontario's caregivers. We advocate for recognition and support for the family, friends, and neighbours whose unpaid care is the hidden backbone of Ontario's health system. Ontario and organizations

February 2024 Newsletter

At the OCC

Caregiver Survey Closes on Friday, March 8th

Our Survey closes at the end of day on Friday, March 8th. Over the next few days, please take a few minutes to post the Survey link again on social media, share with your network, and help us reach our goals!

As of Tuesday, February 21st, we had already received 351 completed surveys, with another 147 in progress. We are seeing good representation from a range of caregivers, including across age ranges and types of caring. For some preliminary results, please take a look at our blog post, [here](#).

The stronger our Survey response, the better our understanding of what caregivers need and the stronger our voice to government. Every voice counts!

Our sincere thanks to all of those who are helping to make our Caregiver Survey a great success, whether by completing the survey, sharing it with family, friends and networks, or disseminating it on social media.

Please Join Us for our General Members Meeting on March 21st

We are looking forward to seeing you at the OCC's next General Members Meeting, scheduled for Thursday March 21st, from 11.00 a.m. until 1.00 p.m. *via* Zoom.

We have a packed agenda, including an update on our Caregiver Survey, a discussion of OCC activities for National Caregiver Day on Tuesday, April 2nd, a presentation from the Ontario Disability Coalition, and more.

Importantly, James Janeiro, Director of Policy and Government Relations at the Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence, will be joining us to discuss work towards a National Caregiving Strategy. This will be a great opportunity not only to learn more about this important initiative, but to provide you thoughts on what should be included in such a Strategy.

If you have not received your calendar invite for this meeting, please send us a note at ontariocaregivercoalitionocc@gmail.com, and we will be sure to include you.

National Caregiver Day

National Caregiver Day is celebrated annually on the first Tuesday in April, as an opportunity to formally recognize the value and needs of caregivers across the country. This year, National Caregiver Day will fall on Tuesday, April 4th.

Each year, the Ontario Caregiver Coalition adopts a theme for National Caregiver Day that reflects and supports our efforts throughout the year. Past themes have included “Caregiving Costs” and “Thanks are not enough”. We will be unveiling our campaign theme and materials for 2024 at the March 21st General Members Meeting.

As with each campaign, we will be sharing key messages and social media posts for Caregiver Day with our members. We will also be reaching out to MPPs to highlight the pressing needs for support of Ontario’s caregivers.

Please join us in celebrating National Caregiver Day on Tuesday, April 4th!

Member Initiatives

Hold the Date: Ontario Shores National Caregiver Day Celebration

Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences will be hosting a National Caregiver Day Celebration on April 4, 2024, from 4.15 – 7.30, with an in-person event for up to 150 caregivers, friends and community stakeholders.

The event will include a Caregiver Photovoice Exhibition, showcasing photography by families and caregivers in our community reflective of our caregiving experience.

There will also be a Caregiver Resource Fair, including representatives from Ontario Shores local agencies such as Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Durham, Durham Mental Health Services (DMHS), Abilities Centre, Toronto Dementia Research Alliance (TDRA) and more.

A new documentary, “The Caregivers” will be premiered, and there will be a Caregiver Townhall moderated by Nora Spinks, CEO, Work-Life Harmony Enterprises and Kevin Frankish of Ontario Shores.

To register, please follow this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FSVZ5VX>.

Recognize Social Workers this Social Work Week

March 4 to 10 is Social Work Week in Ontario, and across Canada, March is National Social Work Month. The Ontario Association of Social Workers (OASW) is encouraging social workers and allied health, mental health and care professionals to join together in recognizing the essential contributions of social workers this March.

Their 2024 theme, *Social Work Opens Doors*, speaks to the many ways that social workers help to create new and empowering pathways and opportunities for the people they support, including caregivers and their loved ones. From providing direct mental health services, to helping people navigate complex systems and challenges, and connecting people with the right supports, social workers make a difference when it's needed most.

This March 4 to 10, join OASW in recognizing and spotlighting the many ways that social workers open doors to health, mental health and wellness for people across Ontario. Learn more and find everything you need to participate in the campaign at oasw.org/SocialWorkWeek.

Webinar: What is the Role of Virtual Reality in Supporting Dementia Caregivers?

On March 20, 2024, from 12.00 until 1.00, the Alzheimer Society of Toronto will be presenting a webinar highlighting advancements in research on dementia care. The webinar will provide an overview of the caregiving/care partnering role in the context of caring for persons living with dementia, and the impact on the carers’ health and wellbeing.

OCC Member Dr. Mary Chiu, from Ontario Shores Mental Health Sciences, will review evidence-based interventions and training programs currently available to support carers for different aspects of this demanding role. She will introduce virtual reality as a technological tool, and its usefulness in supporting individuals in different roles and life circumstances, including dementia caregiving. Finally, Dr. Chiu will introduce a study, for which she is co-Principal Investigator with Dr. Amer Burhan, titled “Dementia Caregivers Skill Training Through Virtual Reality Simulation (VR-SIM Carers)”. This study is inviting people to participate in a project designed to adapt a caregiver training program for dementia onto a Virtual Reality (VR) platform.

You can register for the webinar here: <https://alz.to/event/tdra-webinars-advances-in-dementia-research-zoom/>. You can find more information on the studies here: https://tdn.alz.to/research_study/virtual-reality-vr-training-program-for-dementia-caregivers/. For more information, email Brittany.prokop@camh.ca.

Opportunities to Contribute to Caregiver Focused Research

Queen's University Dementia Caregiver Medication Management Study

Queen's University is recruiting caregivers who can help with understanding the medication management experiences and needs of caregivers of people living with dementia. The goal of the study is to improve resources for caregivers of persons with dementia.

The study is currently seeking 20 caregivers of persons with dementia to take part in an 60 – 90 minute virtual interview. Those selected to participate will receive a \$20 Tim Horton's gift card after their interview is complete as a token of appreciation.

If you are interested in participating or finding about more, you can contact the research team at 19sci1@queensu.ca, or scan the QR code on the poster attached below.

Do you provide support with managing medications for someone with dementia?



We are looking for past or current friend and/or family caregivers of people with dementia to participate in a research study investigating caregivers' experiences and needs of managing medications for someone with dementia

Who can participate?

You may be eligible to participate if you:

1. Are an **unpaid friend or family caregiver for someone with dementia**
2. Have supported **in medication management** activities **weekly for at least 2 months**



What will the study involve?

You will be asked to take part in a structured **60-90 minute virtual interview** over the course of 1 or 2 sessions. You will receive a **\$20 Tim Hortons gift card** in appreciation for your time.



What happens next?

Please contact the research team using the QR code or via email at 19sci1@queensu.ca. If eligible, we will book an interview at a time most convenient for you.



V1.0 - This study has been reviewed for ethical compliance by the Queen's University Health Sciences and Affiliated Teaching Hospitals Research Ethics Board.

Of Interest

After Caregiving: Docuseries on Caregiving and What Comes After

The documentary filmmakers behind Cyber-Seniors have finished their newest project, *After Caregiving*, a docuseries where former caregivers discuss the complex feelings that arise weeks, months and years after their caregiving responsibilities end.

Each episode of the docuseries focuses on a single former caregiver, where they recall their former experiences of caregiving and how they transitioned their life afterward. The filmmakers hope each story they tell can provide comfort and hope to current and former caregivers.

There are eight episodes in total, each about 5 minutes in length. To see an example, you can click [here](#) to see Michelle's Story, which explores the experience of caring for a spouse with early-onset dementia, and what comes after.

Michigan Proposes a \$5,000 Tax Credit for Family Caregivers

Michigan Governor, Gretchen Whitmer has recently called for a \$5,000 tax credit to be introduced for family caregivers. Aware of the financial stress placed on them, Governor Whitmer spoke to the growing need to aid their invaluable work. There is no doubt that the Michigan tax credit has the potential to help many families. There are 1.2 million caregivers in Michigan, and the financial burdens they incur to take care of their loved ones are disproportionately taken on by women and women of colour.

This proposed tax credit is similar to Canada's federal Caregiver Credit. While an important acknowledgement of caregiver financial distress, the Canada Caregiver Credit helps few caregiver families. Our September newsletter covered a Statistics Canada study on the credit that revealed only 2.5% of Canadian families claimed it between 2017 and 2019. The Credit is non-refundable, only available to families below a specific income, and at a tax credit rate of 15%. This means that at maximum, only \$1,071 can be reduced from the amount claimants pay in taxes. You can learn more about this study by clicking [here](#).

Existing and proposed support for Ontario caregivers does not meet the needs. As you may recall from our June newsletter, the OCC partnered with Public Good Initiative to develop a proposal for an Ontario Caregiver Support Benefit (OCSB). The OCSB would provide monthly support to caregivers across Ontario through an accessible process. To learn more about our proposal, please click [here](#).

Like Canada's Caregiver Credit, the proposed Michigan tax credit has accessibility challenges. The total amount of the credit claimed is based on a family's income rather than their caregiving

expenses. To qualify for the full benefit a family would need to make at least \$125,000 and pay more than \$5,000 in non-refundable taxes a year. Most low-income families in Michigan pay next to nothing in taxes.

You can read more about Governor Whitmer's plan for a family caregiver tax credit, [here](#).



If you have items that you would like to see included in future issues of this newsletter, please let us know. Sharing the accomplishments and activities of our members is part of our mandate. If you have received this newsletter in error, or no longer wish to receive it, please reply to this email to let us know, and we will remove you from our mailing list.