



The Ontario Caregiver Coalition (OCC) is the voice of caregivers in Ontario. We advocate for recognition and support for the family, friends, and neighbours whose unpaid care is the hidden backbone of Ontario's health system. Our members include both caregivers from across Ontario and organizations that support them. For more information about the OCC and our work, please see our website at www.ontariocaregivercoalition.ca, or follow us on social media.

September 2025 Newsletter

At the OCC

September 2025 Annual General Meeting

On September 18th, the OCC hosted our Annual General Meeting, where we gather our membership to discuss our activities and status, reflect on the previous year, and look at our plans for the upcoming year.

We are grateful to OCC member Chrissy Sadowski for providing a passionate and thoughtful Caregiver Keynote. Chrissy discussed the many layers of her own caregiving journey, and demonstrated the complexities of who caregivers are and how caregiving impacts their lives. The OCC also shared our Annual Report for the 2024-2025 year. Motivated by a year of change, with an unexpected provincial snap election and an early federal election, the OCC advocated for caregivers at a time where there is serious pressure on our health and social systems. Some of these efforts included our [Caregiver Day campaign](#), “The Scariest Thing – A World Without Caregivers,” creating an [Election Toolkit](#) to raise caregiver voices, supporting [Motion 20 at the Ontario legislature](#), and continuing the release of our [Policy Brief series](#). Guided by our Strategic Plan, we also worked towards strengthening our foundations by augmenting our governance structure, stabilizing our finances, deepening our member collaboration and engagement, and strengthening our communications capacity. The AGM concluded with presentations from our Committees outlining their past work and upcoming plans to continue to build on our successes. Our thanks go to all of those who contributed to organizing, hosting, and presenting at this successful AGM.

Please Welcome Our New Board Members

At our September 18th Annual General Meeting, the OCC welcomed a new slate of Board Directors for the upcoming year.

Several directors returned for another year of service, including **Lauren Bates, Rose-Marie Fraser-Haswell, Debbi Leith, Keena Naik, Daniel Nowoselski, Adriana Shnall, and Liana Sikharudlize**.

We are very pleased to announce the following new Board Members:

Cindy Diogo is the CEO and Co-Founder of ConSoul, a tech platform that reduces the mental load for unpaid caregivers. With nearly 20 years in People & Culture leadership at major enterprises including Cineplex and Mediabrands, Cindy has led large-scale talent strategies, culture initiatives, and organizational transformations. She brings deep expertise in workforce equity, caregiver advocacy, and HR innovation to the OCC Board.

Chrissy Sadowski is the Strategic Partnerships and Community Engagement Manager at Young Caregivers Association. Growing up as a young caregiver herself, she understands the stress that can come along with that position. Now as a parent of a child on the spectrum, she recognizes the toll it can take on siblings as well. Her children were involved in Powerhouse programs beginning at a young age and still utilize their supports today. Between her own children and countless others, Chrissy sees the importance that Young Caregivers provide through counselling, programs, camp, and more.

We also said goodbye to **Board Secretary Daniel Corvino**. Daniel has been a member of the OCC for a number of years, representing MS Canada. He has served with a high degree of effectiveness on the R&A Committee, leading our government relations work in his role as Co-Chair of that Committee. Much of our success in moving forward the agenda on caregiver financial distress can be attributed to his skills and savvy strategic approach. Dan brought this very strategic lens to his time on the Board, as well as his practical experience in working for a small non-profit. We look forward to collaborating with Daniel as he continues on at the OCC as a member of our Partnerships Committee.

Member Initiatives

Supporting Caregivers in the Workplace: Strategies for Employers and Care Partners

Are you an employer looking for ways to support the family caregivers on your team?

As we transition back to in-person work, caregivers face additional challenges in balancing work and caregiving responsibilities. Join the Regional Learning Centre on Wednesday, October 29, 2025 from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. for a one-hour free virtual session, where we will explore ways for employers to encourage caregiver success at work and at home.

Registration link: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/dvtP0yxoQgGY1I_CyAKCFQ

Of Interest

Respite For All: A New Respite Program Through SE Health and Greenshield

This year, one of the main focuses at the OCC has been advocating for caregiver respite. According to our [Fourth Policy Brief](#), those who are not receiving respite supports are at double the risk of other caregivers for mental health issues.

SE Health and Greenshield have partnered to release Respite for All, a joint-initiative to support caregivers. The program is designed to support working caregivers by providing **ten hours of free home-based respite**. Additionally, GreenShield is offering **five hours of culturally sensitive, trauma-informed virtual therapy** with a registered therapist plus a **free one-year subscription to internet-based Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (Digital CBT)**.

If you meet the following eligibility criteria, you will be selected for the pilot project on a first come first serve basis until the allocated quotas are filled:

- You are currently employed
- You work at least 30 hours per week
- You regularly provide care and support to a family member in your home or in their home (e.g. parent, grandparent, partner, child, etc.)

To apply, visit this [online form](#).

Take Action for Change

A Call for Dignity: Why We Must Raise Comfort Allowance for Long-Term Care Residents

Article submitted by Raffaele Travisano (rtc2010@live.ca)

Since 2015, my wife has been a resident in a long-term care (LTC) facility in Ottawa. A devastating stroke left her unable to speak and paralyzed on one side. As her caregiver, I have become her voice—advocating not just for her, but for all residents who deserve dignity and fairness.

One issue has become impossible to ignore: the stagnant Comfort Allowance for residents who receive a rate reduction. This modest monthly allowance — just \$149 — is meant to cover personal expenses such as toiletries, clothing, haircuts, and phone or internet services. For many residents, it is their only source of discretionary income.

Yet the allowance has not increased since 2018. Before that, it rose only twice in more than a decade: from \$143 to \$146 in 2016, and then to \$149 in 2018. Meanwhile, the cost of accommodation in LTC homes has risen by about 17% since 2014, and inflation continues to erode residents' purchasing power.

The result is stark: residents are left choosing between hygiene, comfort, and staying connected with loved ones. For families, this creates a quiet but relentless financial and emotional strain.

We need change. A meaningful first step would be an immediate adjustment to the Comfort Allowance, followed by automatic annual increases tied to inflation. This simple reform would protect residents from being left behind year after year.

If you are reading this as a caregiver, advocate, or policymaker, I urge you to take action. Write to your MPP, raise this issue in your networks, and help amplify the voices of those who cannot speak for themselves. You can find your representative's contact information on the Ontario Legislature's [website](#).

This effort began with my wife's needs, but it extends far beyond her. All long-term care residents deserve dignity. A fair and updated Comfort Allowance is one way to make that a reality.



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.