



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.

December 2025 Newsletter

At the OCC

Year End Message

As 2025 draws to a close, we would like to extend our thanks to everyone who helped to make this another successful year for the Ontario Caregiver Coalition. This includes our Board members who provided careful oversight and steered us towards our goals; our dozens of Committee members, who helped us to advocate, communicate, collaborate and celebrate on behalf of caregivers this year; our outstanding Coordinator, who seamlessly managed a multitude of responsibilities; all of our members who contributed ideas, shared our message, helped us to stretch our resources, and participated in our campaigns; and our many friends who worked with us along the way.

The OCC kept growing and moving forward this year. Our key accomplishments included our two new policy briefs on access to respite care and support for working carers, our participation in the provincial election, our very scary Caregiver Day campaign, our new Member Engagement Strategy, and much more!

Change often happens very slowly: it can take years to prepare the ground, develop ideas, and convince the right people. But when the opportunity arises, it is important to be able to move quickly. Together, we are doing the hard work of preparing for change, day after day. And because we are caregivers and people who care about caregivers, along the way we are also doing the important work of listening to, supporting and celebrating each other.

Together, we are building an Ontario where caregivers are recognized, valued and supported. Thank you for everything that you do. We look forward to another year of working together.

Announcing Our 2026 Caregiver Day Campaign: Care About Change

At our General Members Meeting on December 11th, we announced the theme of Caregiver Day 2026: Care About Change. What makes the OCC unique is that it's a coalition — a community of people who are motivated and excited about the possibility of change. After a year of fear and uncertainty, we want to focus our Caregiver Day efforts on **hope**, within and outside of our coalition, paying attention to the work being done to support caregivers:

- Finalizing the OCC's Policy Briefs series
- Advocating for an Ontario Caregiver Support Benefit
- All of the work our organization members do for caregivers
- All of the support that caregivers find in their own communities

Our three goals for Caregiver Day 2026 are:

1. Bring a hopeful and empowering message about the possibility of change to caregivers and those that care about them
2. Highlight the unique role of the OCC as an organization that can be a voice for caregivers and advocate for change
3. Bring attention to the changes that caregivers need to be supported in our vital roles

Want to help with Caregiver Day? Tell us what change you want to see in 2026!

We're hoping to start early this year by generating engagement across our social media channels, starting by setting goals for the new year. What changes do caregivers need most? From alleviating financial distress, providing mental health supports and respite, and ensuring caregivers in the workforce are supported — what motivates you to fight for change?

If you'd like to participate in our mini-campaign, fill out this [Google form](#).

Opportunities to Participate in Caregiver-Focused Research

Participate in a Study on Caregiver Experience

Researchers at Carleton University are looking for participants to take part in a study on the experience of Ottawa and Eastern Ontario caregivers for people living with dementia, including the challenges they face. The goal of the study is to use their findings to contribute to policy and practices changes that improve understandings about the rights of and supports for caregivers.

To participate in the study, you must:

- Be at least 18 years old;
- Be the primary caregiver for someone living with dementia who has discharged from a hospital in the last 3 years;

- Acted as a caregiver in Ottawa or the surrounding 200 km;
- The person for whom you care must not have had an acute terminal illness for all of the time that you provided care.

Study participants will take part in a 60–90 minute interview. An interpreter can be arranged for people not comfortable communicating in English or French. The interview will be recorded and transcribed. Participants will be compensated with a \$50 gift card from Tim Hortons, Metro, or Loblaws.

Please contact the researcher, Claire McMenemy, to take part or for more details on this study at clairemcmenemy@cmail.carleton.ca.

This study has been cleared by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board A, Clearance #124924. If you have ethical concerns with the study, please contact Carleton University Research Ethics Board, by email at ethics@carleton.ca or you can leave a message by phone at 613-520-2600 x 2517.

Carers Project Study

Are you a caregiver (care partner) or have expertise on caregiving? Are you feeling stressed, isolated, or looking for connections?

The Carers Project team at McMaster University is inviting all caregivers (care partners) of older adults in Ontario to join a research study that aims to co-develop strategies and interventions to improve caregiver's mental health and resources to combat social isolation.

Participants will be asked to do the following:

- Document their caregiving experiences in photographs and discuss them in a 1-hour focus group session;
- Participate in a one-on-one interview (60 minutes) about their knowledge and use of resources/interventions in the community that support their caregiving role;
- Attend a 90-minute community engagement activity to identify the critical issues that arose from the discussions that can be reasonably addressed within the next two years.

To learn more or participate in the Carer's Project, click [here](#).

For more information, please contact the team:

Phone: (905) 525-9140 x 21752

Email: caregiving@nurseworklife.com

Of Interest

New CAMH Mental Health Toolkit

Over half (51%) of the respondents to the [OCC 2024 Survey of Caregivers](#) noted the difficulty in accessing and finding mental health supports for caregivers. Even when there are supports in place, the time and effort it takes to find and access those resources is a barrier for caregivers who find themselves overwhelmed and exhausted.

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) recently launched a [mental health toolkit](#) in an effort to give people an easier way to find and access mental health resources in Canada. The toolkit is organized into seven categories, including a category for caregiving, either for caregivers supporting someone experiencing mental illness, or for caregivers who are looking for ways to support their own mental health.

Health Canada Guide: Caring for Someone with Serious Illness

Supporting someone through serious illness can be both rewarding and challenging. A palliative approach to care recognizes the needs of caregivers as well as the person who is ill and offers guidance, understanding, and support along the way. It can help you and the person you care for understand the illness and what to expect, manage stress, and find support through every stage of illness. It also includes grief support for caregivers, patients, and families while helping people cope with change and loss, both during and after illness.

To learn more about how to have important conversations with your health care team, visit Health Canada's guide: [What to Do When Facing a Serious Illness](#).

Visit Canada.ca/palliative-care for more on a palliative approach to care and its benefits.



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.