



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](http://www.ontariocaregivercoalition.ca), or follow us on social media.

## March 2025 Newsletter

### At the OCC

#### Calling Caregivers to Support Our Caregiver Day Campaign

The first Tuesday in April is Family Caregiver Day. This year, that falls on April 1st. The OCC uses this day to draw attention to caregivers and their needs and to advocate for solutions for these problems.

This year, our theme is **The Scariest Thing: A World Without Caregivers.**

We want to use this day to point out how scary being a caregiver can be — all of the pressure, all of the stress, all of the challenges — in a system not set up to support them. We also want to make sure we show how quickly our society and our systems would fall apart without caregivers.

To that end, we are hoping you can help us show the world what we mean in a way that is hopefully fun and a little therapeutic.

We want you to share with us a photo of you screaming - that could be like the Scream painting, or Drew Barrymore in the movie Scream while holding a phone, or whatever feels right to you — and share with us something that makes you scream. You can submit that to us [here, using this Google Form.](#)

We want to make sure that decision makers see, feel, and metaphorically hear the challenges you are facing so they better understand how urgent it is to act. You'll hear more about this at our General Members Meeting on Thursday, March 20 about how we'll share these stories.

If you could share your photo and what makes you scream with us by **Tuesday, March 25**, that would be great. Please contact [ontariocaregivercoalitionocc@gmail.com](mailto:ontariocaregivercoalitionocc@gmail.com) if you have any questions or any trouble with the form.

## Please join us for our General Members Meeting on March 20<sup>th</sup>

The OCC's first General Members Meeting of 2025 will be held on Thursday, March 20<sup>th</sup>, from 11:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.

As usual, we have a packed agenda. Building on our efforts during the recent provincial election, we will be planning our approach to advocating for caregivers with the new government. As noted above, we will also be planning our National Caregiver Day campaign.

We have invited our member, the Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence, to present on the recently launched National Caregiving Strategy, a landmark accomplishment and an important foundation for future advocacy. We will also be hearing from Dr. Christine Kelly of the University of Manitoba about her innovative research on understanding the concept of Care Poverty in Canada, a project in which the OCC has partnered.

We hope that you will join us for these important conversations. All members should have received a calendar invitation for this meeting. If you have not, please contact us at [ontariocaregivercoalitionocc@gmail.com](mailto:ontariocaregivercoalitionocc@gmail.com) and we will be pleased to assist you.

## Welcoming our new Membership and Communications Coordinator

Our longtime Membership and Communications Coordinator, Devon Makse, is ending his time at the OCC to pursue a full-time opportunity. We're pleased to see him further pursue his career as a paralegal, and appreciate all of his contributions to strengthening the OCC since he started in September 2023. Devon's efforts were central to professionalizing our processes and to making us more resilient and effective. Devon also helped us to expand our social media presence and improve this newsletter. He was a key member of the team for our Caregiver Survey, and for our participation in the 2025 provincial election. Devon has been warm, professional, and incredibly hard-working, and we wish him well with whatever the future holds for him.

Replacing Devon is our new OCC Coordinator, Hayley Munro. Hayley brings her experience in book publishing and digital marketing to the OCC, alongside her passion for social justice. She has previously worked with the literary journal *Acta Victoriana*, Toronto magazine *On the Danforth*, and Canadian publisher Dundurn Press to help promote and support Canadian authors. Having a family history of schizophrenia has informed her allyship as an editor for marginalized writers and creatives. A passionate writer and communicator, she is dedicated to improving caregiver and disability rights across Ontario through intersectional advocacy. We are excited to welcome Hayley to this role, where she will be an essential support to our hardworking team of volunteers.

## Building on the OCC's Election Efforts

When a snap Ontario election was called just over a month ago, the OCC leaped into action to support caregiver voices and bring forward caregiver priorities during this short window of time. The OCC:

- Prepared an [Election Toolkit](#) to support caregiver participation in the election, including information on how to vote, questions to ask of candidates, and templates for requesting meetings with candidates.
- Created [social media tools](#) to be shared across platforms to increase awareness of caregiver needs and support participation in the election.
- Developed a [Policy Platform Comparison](#), highlighting the caregiver-focused commitments of each of the major parties.
- Based on our Caregiver Survey and Policy Briefs, created an [Elections Priorities](#) document which was endorsed by 14 organizations that serve, support or advocate for unpaid caregivers.

Now that a new government has been elected, the OCC's Research and Advocacy Committee will be building on this work to engage the new government and opposition in conversations about recognizing and better meeting caregiver needs. As a first step, as the new Cabinet and shadow Cabinets are appointed, the OCC will be reaching out to MPPs with relevant portfolios to share our priorities and to request initial meetings.

## OCC Fourth Policy Brief Focuses on Respite Care

We are excited to launch the fourth in our series of Policy Briefs based on the 2024 Caregiver Survey, [Building a Better Ontario for Caregivers by Supporting Caregiver Respite](#).

As we all know, caregiving can be intensive, physically and mentally exhausting, and socially isolating. Caregivers may struggle with their own health and wellbeing, whether with sleep, nutrition, exercise, or accessing regular health screenings. Getting a break from caregiving responsibilities — often referred to as respite supports — is essential in sustaining caregivers. Yet relatively few Ontario caregivers have reliable access to respite. Currently, Ontario caregivers must navigate a fragmented, confusing and reactive system to access respite supports. Limited resources mean that many caregivers may be waitlisted or receive minimal access to a break. Caregivers who struggle to take breaks face twice the risk of mental health issues, compared to those who can access respite. Lack of access to respite for caregivers affects the quality of care they can provide and may ultimately add to strain on the health system in the form of additional

calls to 911, emergency room visits, hospital admissions, and early or preventable admissions to long-term care.

Our Brief makes an urgent call for improved access to respite supports for Ontario caregivers, proposing practical starting points for both immediate relief for caregivers, and for building a stronger system of supports. This Brief is the starting point for our efforts to make real change in this area. Please help to spread awareness about the need for caregiver respite by sharing it widely!

## Member Initiatives

### Update from the Centre for Caregiving Excellence

On February 18th, Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence (CCCE), a program of the Azrieli Foundation, was proud to launch [A National Caregiving Strategy for Canada](#). The Strategy was co-designed with thousands of caregivers, care providers, researchers and leaders across the aging, disability and healthcare communities across Canada, laying out bold recommendations for the federal government to transform caregiving systems, reduce financial and workplace burdens, and establish caregiving as a cornerstone of Canada's health and social policies. *We thank the OCC for their ongoing support and endorsement of the Strategy!*

In conjunction, CCCE also launched our campaign, **Act on Care**. The campaign calls on Canadians from coast to coast to visit [canadiancaregiving.org/act](http://canadiancaregiving.org/act) to send a letter to your local MP, federal candidates in your riding, as well as the Minister of Seniors, the key federal minister responsible for a national caregiving strategy. As we enter a federal election period, CCCE will continue the campaign, urging all parties to call for their commitment to Act on Care. *We would greatly appreciate your support for the campaign, and please feel free to share with your networks!*

*Submitted by the CCCE*

## Of Interest

### Upcoming Webinar on Supporting Independence for People with Dementia

On Wednesday, March 19<sup>th</sup>, the Toronto Dementia Research Alliance and the Alzheimer Society of Toronto will be hosting a webinar on how rehabilitation and technology can help people living with dementia stay independent and live at home longer. The webinar will run from 12:00–1:00 p.m.. For more information, or to register, you can visit

<https://alz.to/calendar/supporting-independence-how-rehabilitation-and-technology-can-help-people-living-with-dementia/>.

This webinar is part of an ongoing series highlighting dementia research across Toronto. More information about this webinar series can be found at <https://tdn.alz.to/research-studies> .



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