



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.

January 2026 Newsletter

At the OCC

OCC Fifth Policy Brief Focuses on Supporting Caregivers in the Workforce

The OCC has now formally launched the fifth of the OCC's six Policy Briefs drawing from the OCC Survey, *[Building a Better Ontario for Caregivers by Supporting Caregivers in the Workforce](#)*, together with the in-depth [Policy Options Report](#) on which it draws. The Brief, and its accompanying Report, draws on the qualitative and quantitative data in our Caregiver Survey, consultations with caregivers, innovative policy research, and interviews with researchers and key stakeholders.

Most caregivers — about two-thirds — are in the labour force, meaning that they are juggling their work, their caregiving role, and often many other responsibilities. The challenges of managing all of these responsibilities can be intense, and existing laws and policies do not ensure that caregivers have the supports and flexibility they need. Lacking supports, caregivers may struggle with isolation, and diminished physical and mental health. Many find they must reduce their work commitments by refusing opportunities for training or career advancement, reducing their work hours, choosing non-standard work, or stepping away from the workforce entirely. This has long-term implications for the career path of caregivers, as well as for their financial security. For employers, the struggles of working caregivers are a business and talent strategy issue — developing policies and benefits that include and accommodate caregivers can be a strategic advantage.

We have identified policy solutions that are practical and that would make a meaningful difference, and will be reaching out to stakeholders and decision-makers to make the case for change.

Please help to spread awareness about the need for policy change by sharing it widely and engaging with us on social media!

OCC Coordinator Transition

Hayley Munro, our valued Communications and Membership Coordinator for the past year, has accepted a full-time position with Penguin Random House Canada. Her last day in the Coordinator role will be Friday, January 23rd. We are so pleased to see Hayley continuing to build her career, as well as thankful for the major contributions she has made over her time at the OCC. Hayley has shown great leadership in strengthening and professionalizing all aspects of our communications, helping us to raise our profile and sharpen our image. She has led work on our newsletter, social media, and website, as well as playing a key role in our ongoing brand refresh. Her keen editorial eye has improved all of our publications, and the Style Guide that she developed for us will ensure that our voice is consistent, clear, and professional. As anyone who has communicated with Hayley will attest, she is professional, responsible, timely, and helpful.

To support the transition to a new Coordinator, Hayley will continue to lead work on our Caregiver Day campaign, a key opportunity for us each year. As well, we are very fortunate that Hayley has decided to continue giving her time and skills to the OCC through volunteering on our Communications Committee.

A quick note from Hayley:

I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to work with all of you over the last year. The work I see being done every day by our membership is so motivating. One of the things that kept me optimistic in 2025 was seeing that impact at the OCC — the work put into our policy briefs, the Motion for the OCSB, the excitement and enthusiasm for Caregiver Day, the presentations at our GMMs about research and advocacy for caregivers. Most importantly, what keeps me going is hearing individual stories from caregivers who know that change is possible. I'm looking forward to continuing to help the OCC on our Communications and Advocacy Committee (we're doing lots of fun stuff over there if you're thinking about joining!), and I'm excited to see what's in store for the OCC in 2026.

We are happy to welcome our new Coordinator, Anne Marie Kirsten, who joins us on January 19th. Anne Marie comes to us through the same Publishing program that prepared Hayley so well for this role. As well as having experience as a freelance writer, she also has a substantial background in public relations, including as a Publicist for the Royal Ontario Museum. Anne Marie is excited to contribute to the mission of the OCC, and we look forward to benefiting from her skills.

We are anticipating a seamless transition for our membership. Please continue to contact us with your ideas, questions and needs through our email, ontariocaregivercoalitionocc@gmail.com, or through our social media channels.

Member Initiatives

The Young Caregiver Council of Canada Care Connects Us Campaign and Webinars

The Young Caregiver Council of Canada (YCCC) has officially launched its national [website](#) as part of their Care Connects Us campaign. The YCCC brings together young people ages 14–30 who support a family member or close friend living with illness, disability, mental health challenges, substance use, aging-related needs, and other complex life circumstances.

Alongside their website launch, the YCCC are hosting two free webinars.

The first webinar, which takes place on January 22nd from 7:00 to 8:00 pm EST, brings young carers and young people together to learn more about the YCCC.

The second, which takes place on January 29th from 1:00 to 2:00 pm EST, invites professionals who work with young people and families to learn how to better support young carers.

Both webinars are hosted in collaboration with the Young Caregivers Association and the Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence.

Through their website and webinars, you'll find:

- A national support list
- A growing multimedia resource library
- Opportunities for research and community partnerships and projects
- Stories and insights from our blog, grounded in young carers' lived experiences

To register for either webinar, visit the [upcoming events page](#) on their website.

Opportunities to Participate in Caregiver-Focused Research

Seeking Caregivers to Participate in a Focus Group on Caregivers & Technology

The Ontario Caregiver Organization (OCO) is looking for caregivers to join one of several focus groups to gain insight and better understand how technology can be of help to caregivers.

They are interested in hearing from caregivers who fall into either group:

- **Group A:** Are comfortable with technology (including AI) and are using or thinking about using any form of technology or AI to help them with their caregiving role.
- **Group B:** Are less comfortable with technology (including AI) and/or are not frequent users of technology but are interested in how it might make their caregiving role easier.

The focus groups will be done online using Zoom and will take 60 to 90 minutes. OCO is offering an honorarium of \$50 to those who participate. Participation is voluntary. We are

interested in hearing your opinions, no attempt will be made to sell you anything or change your point of view. The sessions will be recorded but all opinions expressed will remain anonymous and views will be grouped together to ensure no particular individual can be identified.

If you are interested, **please email Maurine Parzen** at drparzen@gmail.com. Please include your name, phone number, interest in Group A or Group B, and the focus group session time/date(s) that you are available to attend (find those times below).

Group A: Focus group times/dates for caregivers who use technology/AI and consider themselves to be comfortable with technology:

- January 26 at 6 PM
- January 29 at 6 PM
- February 1 at 3 PM

GROUP B: Focus group times/dates for caregivers who consider themselves to be less comfortable with technology, but are interested in how it might make their caregiving role easier:

- January 28 at 6 pm
- February 2 at 6 PM
- February 7 at 3 PM

A Zoom link will be provided to confirmed participants.

These discussions are being facilitated by Maurine Parzen RN, PhD and caregiver with a research background in caregiving and technology.

Of Interest

Palliative Care: Support for Living Well at Any Stage of Serious Illness

As a part of their Palliative Care Campaign, Health Canada has released a guide on what to do when facing a serious illness.

Some think that palliative care is only needed at the end of life, but that's a common misunderstanding. Palliative care is for anyone living with serious illness, at any age and at any stage. It can be provided alongside treatments aimed at curing or managing the illness. It focuses on improving quality of life and helping people live as fully as possible by addressing physical symptoms as well as emotional, psychological, social and spiritual needs. It also supports families and caregivers through the challenges of serious illness. A palliative approach

to care can be provided by your family doctor, nurse, or others. If your care needs become more complex, you can be referred to a palliative care specialist for more comprehensive care.

Starting the conversation early with your health or social service provider can help you better understand your options and make choices that align with what matters most to you. Learn more from Health Canada's guide: [What to Do When Facing a Serious Illness](#).

To learn more about the benefits of a palliative approach to care, visit [Canada.ca/palliative-care](#).



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.