



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 2026 Newsletter

### At the OCC

#### General Members Meeting and In-Person Social

Our upcoming General Members Meeting, scheduled for **Thursday, March 26th, from 2:00–4:00 p.m.**, will be hybrid, allowing those who wish to meet in person, while still offering the convenience and accessibility of an online meeting to those for whom that is the best option.

We would like to extend our thanks to the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, who will be hosting this meeting at their offices at 20 Eglinton Avenue West, 16th Floor, in the John Mann Room. These offices are located near Yonge and Eglinton in midtown Toronto, conveniently located near transit, and with paid parking available under the nearby Yonge Eglinton Centre.

We are looking forward to another informative discussion, which will include presentations on:

- Caregiver Day 2026, in which we will launch our Caregiver Day theme—*Care About Change*, from our Communications Coordinator, Samantha Pantos,
- Making a Difference for Caregiver Mental Health through Research from Adriana Schnall of the Koschitsky Centre for Caregiving Innovation,
- Building a Grassroots Movement from Rebekah Gold of the Young Caregivers Council of Canada,

and more! As well, just before our General Members Meeting, from **1:00-2:00 p.m.**, we will host an **In-Person Social**, also at the Alzheimer Society offices in the Gordie Howe Room. This will allow long-time members to get re-acquainted, and newer members to be personally welcomed. We will offer light refreshments and a fun activity to launch our campaign and help us get to know each other.

We are looking forward to a great afternoon and hope that you can join us, whether in-person or virtually.

## Join Us on April 7th for Caregiver Day: Care About Change

Caregiver Day is fast approaching! Every year, the OCC hosts our annual Caregiver Day Campaign to bring awareness to caregiver issues and advocate for change. This year on Tuesday, April 7th, our theme is **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.

Want to help us on social media? On April 7th, make sure you like and share our posts. And if you don't already, follow us on our social channels: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [X](#) (Twitter).

P.S. It's not too late to fill out our [Caregiver Day survey](#)! As a member of the OCC, what part of your life drives you to make change? Send us a photo of you holding up a sign with your answer (no need to show your face).

## Join Us at the National Caregiver Day Symposium

We are excited to announce that our OCC Chair, Lauren Bates, will be speaking at the 2026 National Caregiver Day Symposium, hosted by the Canadian Home Care Association and our organization member, the Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence, a program of the Azrieli Foundation.

This national event brings together caregivers, people with lived experience, healthcare and community providers, researchers, employers, and system leaders to explore how caregiving evolves across ages and stages and how we can better support caregiver wellbeing across Canada.

Lauren Bates will join the panel, *Employer Supports for Caregivers - From Evidence to Action*, to discuss our [fifth policy brief](#), alongside OCC Member Allison Williams of McMaster University, Tyler Downey from SEIU Health, and caregiver Avijeet Palmar, moderated by the OCC's Amy Coupal.

Other highlights include the *Youth and Young Adult Caregiving* panel featuring fellow Members of the OCC, Rebekah Gold of the Young Caregivers Council of Canada and Chrissy Sadowski of the Young Caregivers Association, as well as Vivian Stamatopoulos of Ontario Tech University.

We look forward to contributing to conversations that highlight solutions, collaboration, and innovation in caregiving and cheering on our friends at the OCC. You can view the full agenda [here](#).

**Event details:**

- **Date:** Tuesday, April 7th, 2026
- **Locations:** The Westin Harbour Castle, Toronto
- **Virtual participation available**

Learn more and register: [National Caregiver Day Symposium 2026 | CHCA](#)

## Member Initiatives

### OCC Members' 2026 Pre-Budget Submission Highlights

March 26th, 2026, is Ontario Budget day. Keep your eye out to see how Ontario responded to these pre-budget submissions from our organization members.

#### [AdvantAge Ontario](#)

AdvantAge Ontario's Pre-Budget Submission advocated for investments that ease pressure on hospitals and ensure LTC homes have the resources required to support the changing population. AdvantAge Ontario recommended the Ontario government:

- **Dramatically expand supports for seniors' supportive housing, and home and community care** by expanding affordable seniors' supportive housing supply, stabilizing existing programs, strengthening community-based models, and growing capacity in home care and community support services.
- **Enhance supports for residents with rising acuity** by providing support for mental health and addictions (MH&A) and increasing base operational funding.

#### [Alzheimer Society of Ontario](#)

The Alzheimer Society of Ontario's Pre-Budget Submission advocated for establishing a sustainable dementia care framework – one that not only addresses current system gaps but also prepares the system for the future of dementia and disease-modifying therapies. The Alzheimer Society of Ontario recommended the Ontario Government:

- **Implement the Improving Dementia Care in Ontario Act** to establish a provincial dementia framework that improves access to dementia care in the province.
- **Mandate the creation of a coordinating body for dementia care within Ontario Health**, supported by legislative authority and with funding control, to oversee and direct dementia care across the continuum of care in Ontario.

- **Invest funds** in hospital and long-term care diversion, dementia competency training in long-term care for providers, activation and respite for early-stage dementia in diverse communities, transitional support to long-term care, and detection and diagnosis of dementia.

### [Ontario Community Support Association \(OCSA\)](#)

The OCSA's Pre-Budget Submission advocated for community support services, home care and independent living services, which allow people to remain in their homes and communities while reducing system pressures, reflecting Ontarians' preference to age at home. The OCSA recommended the Ontario Government:

- **Protect the progress of the previous multi-year agreement for home care with a renewed investment**, ensuring a 5% base budget increase and 5% service volume growth.
- **Continue building capacity in the community** by investing in Community Support Services (CSS) and Independent Living (IL) to prevent imminent service cuts and expand capacity to address operational pressures, increase compensation and invest in digital infrastructure.
- **Invest in healthy aging solutions for seniors** annually to scale proven integrated care models to fund coordinators in 100 Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) and connect 30,000 seniors with Community Wellness Hubs.
- **Expand and optimize home care clinics** to enhance wrap-around services, increase clinic capacity, and strengthen connections to primary care and rehabilitation for at-risk clients.
- **Build future system leadership capacity** to train current and emerging leaders in home and community support, mental health and addictions, and primary care with the competencies and confidence to drive integrated, people-centred models of care – advancing broader health system reforms in the province.

### [Parkinson Canada](#)

Parkinson Canada's Pre-Budget Submission advocated for fair financial assistance and access to disability supports to reduce the increased burden on families or close friends to either pay for care or provide it themselves. Parkinson Canada recommended the Ontario Government:

- **Listen to people with lived experience of Parkinson's and address known eligibility and accessibility barriers to the Disability Tax Credit** to ensure more people with Parkinson's can access this needed tax credit and lessen the negative impact from the economic uncertainty they face.

- **The federal government must work with the provinces and territories** to ensure there are adequate numbers of specialists, like neurologists, being trained and entering practice in Canada. Parkinson Canada also recommends this include removing barriers to the credentialing of internationally trained health care professionals and implementing pan-Canadian licensure for physicians to improve the inter-provincial mobility for health care workers.
- **Invest in Canadian Parkinson’s research** by enhancing health data collection to support people living with Parkinson’s and to better understand best practices for treatment and care.

### The OCC

Our submission advocated for reducing the financial impact of caregiving and the lack of respite for caregivers, aiming to help lighten the financial burdens of caregiving and allow caregivers to rest, recharge, and attend to their own health and personal needs. The OCC recommended the Ontario Government:

- **Introduce an Ontario Caregiver Support Benefit**, a monthly direct financial support that will alleviate financial hardships, reduce strain on the healthcare system, and help ensure caregivers can continue their vital roles in supporting Ontario’s health and long-term care systems.
- **Support Caregivers in the workplace** by harmonizing existing caregiving-related leaves into a single, simplified Caregiver Leave that is flexible and inclusive, expanding Family Responsibility Leave and amending the OHS Act to require workplaces to develop safety plans and programs that address the needs of working caregivers.
- **Develop a provincial respite strategy** by creating a comprehensive, coordinated respite system for Ontario in collaboration with caregivers, communities, and all relevant Ministries, and allocate additional dedicated funding for respite services to support caregivers in need.
- **Increase funding for mental health services tailored to the specific needs of Caregivers** by allocating additional funding for counselling, support groups, and stress management programs specifically designed for caregivers, offered through various channels such as in-person, online, and telephone.
- **Continue bettering access to essential home and community care for all Ontarians**, welcoming the commitments in the Ministry of Health’s Annual Plan to reduce wait times for home and community care and the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services to improve access to developmental services and ensure that the Government of Ontario’s investments are based on clear selection criteria and that providers are transparent and publicly accountable.

## Opportunities to Participate in Caregiver-Focused Research

### Participate in a Study on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

Researchers at the Baycrest Hospital Rotman Research Institute are conducting a study on the effectiveness of Cognitive-behavioural-therapy (CBT) in treating depression in midlife individuals, *specifically tailored towards caregivers of individuals living with dementia*. CBT is an evidence-based, gold-standard treatment for depression shown to reduce mood symptoms and improve cognitive functioning while preventing depression relapse.

The goal of the study is to help define markers for monitoring CBT success as well as a set of traits that determine who will benefit the most from CBT. The findings can also help improve outcomes for dementia patients whose caregivers are at a high risk of depression and dementia themselves.

To participate in the study, you must:

- Be between 40-75 years of age;
- Think you may be depressed;
- Not currently be using any recreational drugs.

Eligible study participants will take part in free 12-week CBT for depression, studying how the brain changes in response to CBT, using brain imaging. CBT sessions will be 50 minutes per week and take place online. Participation will also require 2 visits to Baycrest at Week 0 (pre-CBT) and Week 12 (post-CBT) for imaging and other assessments.

To take part or for more details on this study, please contact the research team at [cbttrial@research.baycrest.org](mailto:cbttrial@research.baycrest.org)

This study has been cleared by the Baycrest Research Ethics Board (Baycrest REB). If you have ethical concerns with the study, please contact Baycrest REB at [ethics@research.baycrest.org](mailto:ethics@research.baycrest.org) or by phone at (416) 785-2500 ext. 2190.

## Of Interest

### Ontario Human Rights is Consulting on Human Rights and Family Caregiving

The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) is in consultation to update the *Policy and guidelines on discrimination because of family status* (2007) (the *Policy*). OHRC policies provide guidance to employers, housing providers and service providers on rights and responsibilities under the Ontario *Human Rights Code* (*Code*). The *Policy* on family status specifically addresses the intersection of human rights and caregiving, setting standards for accommodation of employees and students with caregiving responsibilities, and for avoiding discrimination against family caregivers more generally.

Since the release of the *Policy*, the structure of families and the needs of caregivers and care recipients have become increasingly diverse. At the same time, there is heightened pressure on caregivers, due in part to a changing work landscape, an aging population, and greater needs for housing and services in communities. These structural pressures have implications for caregivers' human rights under the *Code*. Caregivers of children, older adults, and adults with disabilities continue to face discrimination and barriers to their full inclusion in employment, housing, and services.

This is a great opportunity for the OCC, caregivers and organizations that serve and support caregivers to inform policy revisions and advocate for caregivers. The OCC's participation in the consultation will help the OHRC identify emerging human rights concerns and solutions related to people with caregiving responsibilities in the areas of employment, housing, and services.

Written submission can be sent by April 10, 2026 to [consultations@ohrc.on.ca](mailto:consultations@ohrc.on.ca). Questions about the consultations can be directed to Anya Kater, Senior Policy Analyst, at [anya.kater@ohrc.on.ca](mailto:anya.kater@ohrc.on.ca) or (416) 562-1355.

### Upcoming Healthy Aging for Older Adults Knowledge Mobilization Event

Sign up for Unity Health Toronto's Healthy Aging for Older Adults Knowledge Mobilization Event, which will focus on the Top 10 Healthy Aging Priorities identified by the community.

This virtual event will share priorities identified directly by older adults, caregivers, healthcare professionals, and community partners, and will provide an opportunity to help inform next steps for research, policy, and practice related to healthy aging in Ontario.

#### **Who should attend:**

Individuals living in Ontario who identify as:

- Older adults aged 65 years and older
- Caregivers of older adults
- Healthcare professionals who provide care to older adults

#### **Date (same session, two dates available):**

- March 30, 2026 at 3:00-3:45 (EDT)
- March 31, 2026 at 5:00-5:45PM (EDT)

#### **Location:**

- Virtual via Zoom

Learn more and register [here](#).

## Participate in a Survey for Patients Advisor Network (PAN) on Health Information

The PAN team invites you to participate in a confidential online survey administered by Ipsos, an independent research firm, in partnership with PAN. Share your views as a patient/caregiver partner on your trust, use, and understanding of health data and make your voice heard.

This survey closes on March 23rd, 2026. To participate in this survey, click [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.