



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.

June 2026 Newsletter

At the OCC

Call for Board and Committee Members

The OCC has begun our call for Board and Committee Members, ongoing until July 7th, 2026.

Our Board members are unpaid caregivers, organizational members, and caregiver advocates who are passionate about making change. The OCC's Board plays a central role in setting the OCC strategy by ensuring good governance and organizational resilience, while overseeing the work of the various Committees. Board members generally dedicate between 4 and 10 hours per month to the organization, and serve a 2-year, renewable term. It is important to us to have a range of experiences and perspectives on our Board and Committees. Our organizational culture is welcoming, supportive, and flexible. This is a great opportunity to contribute to change, meet like-minded people, and develop your skill sets.

If you are interested in joining the Board, please send your resume and cover letter to ontariocaregivercoalitionocc@gmail.com, attention of the Nominating Committee, by end of day on July 7th, 2026. For more information about applying, please visit our [website](#).

We also welcome applications from those who want to join one of our five [Committees](#). Committee work is more flexible in terms of time commitment, with some Committee members dedicating a couple of hours each month, and others giving significantly more. If you are interested in Committee work, please send us an email, and we will set up a time to meet and find the right fit for you. As well, you can learn more about our committees by clicking [here](#).

We rely on our Board and Committee members to work towards our shared vision of an Ontario where caregivers are recognized, valued, and supported. Please consider giving your time to the OCC as a Board or Committee member, or reaching out to friends or colleagues who may be interested in contributing to our work.

June General Members Meeting Recap

Our latest General Members Meeting was held on June 18th over Zoom. We were fortunate to have several thought-provoking presentations.

Our Board Secretary, Liana Sikharudlidze, spoke about her caregiving experience as a double-duty caregiver. She shared with us that she works in healthcare. By day, she was coordinating care for families navigating medical hardships. By night, she was providing care to her grandparents. Liana's opening reminded us that caregiving is not just a sprint; it is a marathon, and love alone is not a care plan. Caregiving requires knowledge, respite, community, and support, and caregivers deserve all of those things. She encourages caregivers to seek out resources and accept support, and that doing so is a sign of strength that can help us continue to show up every day.

Our OCC Chair, Lauren Bates, shared that we are currently working on our sixth and final Policy Brief, focusing on making caregivers matter in the systems that they navigate. While caregivers are essential to care recipients living in settings such as group homes, long-term care, retirement homes, and other institutions, most caregivers are supporting people who are and who want to continue living in the community. To make this possible, caregivers must often organize a mix of supports around their person in an environment where community services are limited and fragmented. It is most frequently the caregiver's role to ensure that services are located and coordinated and paperwork is completed. This aspect of the caregiver's role is often poorly understood by those who have not undertaken it. It is also one of the most exhausting, time-consuming and frustrating aspects of the role. Our final Policy Brief aims to demonstrate what these systems would look like and how they would improve if caregiver needs and voices were embedded in their design. To read our other Policy Briefs, click [here](#).

We also heard from Dr. Matthias Hoben about his work in adult day programs to provide caregiver respite. As part of his research, he has found that the effects of day programs vary by country. Outside the US, it is apparent that day programs help avoid long-term care if you have enough exposure, enough time in the program, and a sense of community. The quality of care provided also needs to meet certain standards. Additionally, if the caregivers themselves are not supported, they may not send their care recipients to these programs because getting the person ready is too stressful. Dr. Hoben has concluded that adult day programs definitely work if the right conditions are in place; however, the systems surrounding these programs are often unsupported. The key takeaway from Dr. Hoben's presentation is that the OCC understands the fragmentation in the system and is working on creating a framework to help define an aligned respite system that utilizes adult day programs to make change rather than simply recommending services.

Michelle Bertrand of the [Regional Learning Centre](#) told us about their Caregiver Education Program. A series of events that cover a wide range of topics aimed at educating caregivers on the areas they are most interested in. This is a wonderful opportunity for caregivers to connect, share experiences, and find community. The RLC's end goal is to help caregivers feel less alone while providing informative tools caregivers can utilize to relieve stress and make caregiving easier. [Subscribe](#) to their mailing list or visit their website to learn more.

We also heard from our Strategic Planning Working Group, who provided an update on the OCC's progress, with the full strategic plan for 2027-2031 to come at our Annual General Meeting in the fall. As well, the Chair of the Caregiver Collective, Chrissy Sadowski, shared more on her efforts to refresh the collective to provide an opportunity for caregivers to connect and empower one another through meetings, and our Mental Health Working Group told us about their plans to ensure that caregiver mental health remains a priority within policy, practice, and service delivery discussions. If you are interested in contributing to this work or would like to share your perspective, please email us at ontariocaregivercoalitionocc@gmail.com.

Thank you to all of those who were able to attend. We appreciated the lively discussion. OCC members will receive copies of presentations and formal meeting notes in the coming weeks.

2026 Member Spotlight Series

Calling all of our Member Organizations!

Beginning in July, the OCC will be promoting our second annual Member Spotlight Series. The Member Spotlight is both a celebration of the tireless work our Organization Members contribute to our cause and a chance for our members and friends to learn more about the important work our Organization Members do outside the OCC.

Be on the lookout on our [website](#) and social media pages for your organization's feature! You can find links to our social media at the bottom of this newsletter.

The OCC's Website is Getting a Refresh

The OCC's website revitalization project is in full swing. The goal of this project is to ensure the OCC is visible and well understood, that our audiences get the information they need, that our committees achieve their goals, and to help caregivers use their voice. Currently, we are working on consolidating what we have found through analytics and internal feedback to plan our next steps. We will be identifying our key audiences and what they need to get from the website.

As part of this process, we want to hear from our membership! Tell us whether or not you use our website, and if so, how and what for? To offer your feedback, please fill out our [survey](#).

The OCC's Newsletter is Going on Summer Vacation

The OCC's newsletter is issued 9 times a year. Throughout July and August, the newsletter goes on pause and will return in September.

This year so far has featured many informative articles, updates on what the OCC is working on, research opportunities, social media campaigns, and how the OCC is continuing to fight for change for caregivers across Ontario.

Thank you for reading our newsletter. We look forward to our return in September!

Member Initiatives

Research Participation Opportunity: Share Your Experiences and Knowledge on Aging, Care, and Dementia as a Young Person (Ages 14-35)

You are invited to participate in a survey to better understand the knowledge and experiences of young people (ages 14-35) across Canada with care, aging, and dementia. This project is being conducted at Brock University, in partnership with the Young Caregiver Council of Canada and the Young Caregivers Association.

Why Are They Doing This Study?

The proportion of older people is increasing worldwide, and as you get older, it is more common to develop a disease called dementia. People who live with dementia need support from their families or professionals to help them to stay healthy and well, to adapt to changing abilities, and to engage in activities that bring joy and a sense of purpose. The researchers know that many young people in Canada support older people, including those who live with dementia in their families and communities. However, they don't know a lot about their experiences, knowledge and attitudes about care, older people, and dementia. And very little research has explored these experiences by asking young people directly about them.

As a result, the research team doesn't know if there are any gaps in young people's knowledge or what types of education and support services are needed to help young people know more and to help them to support older people today or in the future when they become caregivers.

To better understand these topics, the research team at Brock University collaborated with members of the [Young Caregiver Council of Canada](#), a grassroots advocacy group of young carers between the ages of 14 to 30 that works in partnership with the [Young Caregivers Association](#) to create a comprehensive survey.

Their aims in this study are to understand:

1. Young people's experiences and knowledge about aging, care, and dementia

2. Young people's care experiences and supports more generally

What Will You Be Asked To Do?

You will be asked to participate in an online survey (approximately 25-40 minutes in total). Your participation in this online survey will be completely anonymous.

Eligibility to Participate in This Study:

Participants must be between the ages of 14 to 35 and reside in Canada to be eligible to participate in this study.

For more information about this study, including how to participate, please click [here](#) to access the informed consent letter and to complete the survey.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Brock University Research Ethics Board (REB# 24-358).

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study.

Of Interest

The Care Scorecard of Ontario Reveals Ontario's Care Economy is in Crisis

The Care Scorecard for Ontario reports on care policy areas related to both unpaid and paid care work. The OCC was consulted to discuss the impacts on unpaid care work.

New research suggests the care system in Ontario is in crisis. People are struggling to access all types of care—from care-supporting infrastructure like affordable housing and electricity to care services across the spectrum. Our social safety net continues to weaken. Those tasked to provide care, both paid and unpaid, are overlooked, overworked, and under-resourced. Many of the gaps in care that Ontarians are currently experiencing can be traced back to public policy decisions over decades.

When it comes to care-supporting physical infrastructure, unpaid care work received a 35%, care services received a 33%, care-related social protection benefits received a 43%, and care-supporting workplaces received a 40%, all of which are a failing grades.

The Care Scorecard for Ontario found that care policies in Ontario are failing for many reasons, including that care systems are operating at unsustainable levels, housing precarity and cost of living create high care needs that cannot be met by the current system, and that strong physical infrastructure enables good care, but deregulating and privatizing it creates a greater burden of care, shifting responsibilities onto households.

The Care Scorecard for Ontario says that valuing care work means investing in structural change and material support, not just performative appreciation or gratitude. One way the Care Scorecard proposes Ontario can accomplish this is by creating better conditions for unpaid care, suggesting Ontario policymakers:

- Acknowledge the dependency on unpaid care and work towards social change by measuring the impact care policies have on unpaid caregivers.
- Implement a basic income to ensure that benefits are universal and not dependent on employment, immigration status, or marital status.

The Care Scorecard for Ontario reinforces what we already know: care work is central to how our economy works, and keeping the care system healthy is a collective endeavour.

To read the full digital report and learn more about the scorecard and how provincial policies shape Ontario's care economy, 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.