



The Ontario Caregiver Coalition is the voice of Ontario's caregivers. We advocate for recognition and support for the family, friends, and neighbours whose unpaid care is the hidden backbone of Ontario's health system.

April 2024 Newsletter

At the OCC

Calling for Board and Committee Members

The OCC has launched its annual call for new Board and Committee members.

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 4 to 10 hours per month to the OCC, and serve a 2 year, renewable term.

Committee work is flexible in terms of time commitment, with some Committee members dedicating a couple of hours each month, and others giving significantly more. Committee members share their skills in advocacy, research, communications, public policy, community engagement, stakeholder relations, operations, and governance. If you have a skill that you are interested in sharing with the OCC, there is a place for you!

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.

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.

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.

If you are interested in joining the Board, please send your resume and letter of interest to ontariocaregivercoalitionocc@gmail.com, attention of the Nominating Committee, by end of day June 28th, 2024.

For more information, please visit our website by clicking [here](#).

Caregiver Day 2024: Building the OCC, One Voice at a Time

Our thanks to all who participated in the OCC's National Caregiver Day campaign this year, whether by sharing with us your reasons for joining the OCC: viewing, liking, or sharing our social media posts; or by recognizing this important day in some other fashion.

This year's theme, "Building a Better Ontario for Caregivers, One Voice at a Time", will continue to guide our outreach and engagement work this year, as we continue to showcase how involvement with the OCC helps all of us on our journey towards change for current and future caregivers.

	<p>"Let's face it - caregiving is difficult. But it doesn't have to be. I joined the OCC because I want to be part of change that will help caregivers and other individuals who are walking a similar path as myself."</p> <p>Sharon Gabison, caregiver and researcher</p>		<p>"As a family caregiver who works in home and community care, I joined the OCC to support caregivers through education, innovative problem-solving, and advocacy."</p> <p>Keena Naik, Ontario Caregiver Coalition Board Member</p>
<p>Building a Better Ontario for Caregivers, One Voice at a Time Join us at www.ontariocaregivercoalition.ca</p> 	<p>Building a Better Ontario for Caregivers, One Voice at a Time Join us at www.ontariocaregivercoalition.ca</p> 		

Celebrating Volunteer Week

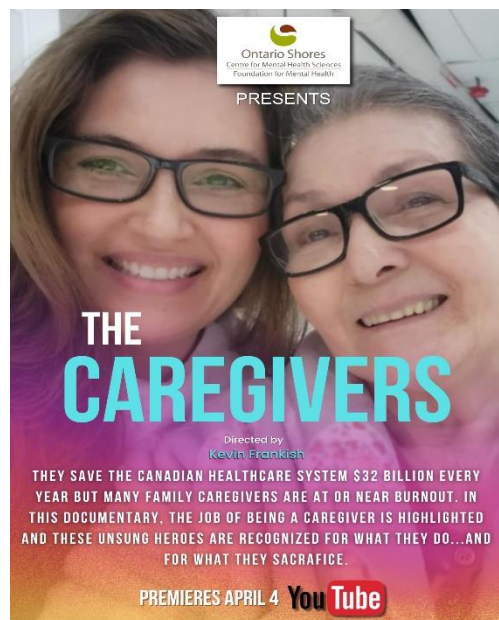
Canada's National Volunteer Week was celebrated from April 14th to 20th 2024. National Volunteer Week is an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the importance of each and every volunteer's impact from coast to coast to coast. As a volunteer-driven organization, the Ontario Caregiver Coalition was glad to have this opportunity to thank all of OCC's members, past and present, for giving of their time, skills, knowledge and energy to make a difference for caregivers in this province, both present and future.

Thank you for your commitment to change!

Member Initiatives

“The Caregivers” Documentary

On April 4th, Ontario Shores launched its documentary on the experience of unpaid caregiving, “The Caregivers”, with an event at Ontario Shores that included a resource fair and Caregiver Townhall. The OCC is pleased to have been able to participate in the development and launch of this thoughtful and moving film. “The Caregivers” is now available to view on YouTube here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2YmbSEdMty8>, and we encourage you to take a few moments to watch it.



Canadian Centre for Caregiver Excellence Consulting on Development of Their National Caregiving Strategy

The Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence is working towards the development of a National Caregiver Strategy, in light of the federal government’s recently announced plans to develop a National Caregiver Strategy.

This strategy will focus on areas of **federal** jurisdiction. This includes many issues of concern to caregivers. The federal government is responsible for the federal taxation system, including the current Caregiver Tax Credit. It provides funding and national standards for health. It is also responsible for the Employment Insurance System, which includes Compassionate Care Leave.

The CCCE will be collecting input during the month of May. You find out more, including how to participate, [here](#).

Mississauga Halton Regional Learning Centre Upcoming Events for Caregivers

The Mississauga Halton Regional Learning Centre has two upcoming virtual events for caregivers interested in the programs they offer or that care for a loved one with hearing health needs.

On Thursday May 9 from 1-2 PM, they are hosting a webinar via Zoom highlighting their Virtual Rec Connect and Seniors Life Enhancement Centre Adult Day Programs. At the event, the topics of discussion will include: an overview of both programs, the benefits the programs can bring to care providers, and the eligibility requirements for both.

To learn more about or to register for this event, please click [here](#).

In collaboration with the Canadian Hearing Society, they are hosting a five week webinar series titled Sound Advice On Hearing Health for Caregivers. The webinars will run every Monday from 1-3 PM, from May 27-June 24. The series will focus on developing the communications skills and confidence of caregivers that care for their loved ones with hearing health needs.

To learn more about or to register for this webinar series, please click [here](#).

Of Interest

Federal Budget 2024

The recently released federal budget contained two items of importance to caregivers:

1. **A commitment to develop a National Caregiving Strategy:** A national strategy can provide clarity of direction and shared priorities, while creating a sense of urgency for change. In the United States, the development of a National Caregiver Strategy has helped to develop momentum around change. While this announcement lacked many details, it did include a commitment to consult publicly. The OCC will continue to monitor developments and share information with our membership.
2. **Disability Benefit:** The long-awaited Disability Benefit was launched with the budget. The federal government committed to begin providing payments to eligible Canadians starting in July 2025. Budget 2024 proposes funding of \$6.1 billion over six years, beginning in 2024-25, and \$1.4 billion per year ongoing.

The proposed benefit will provide a maximum of \$2,400 per year for low income persons with disabilities between the ages of 18 and 64. It will be available to people with a valid Disability Tax Credit certificate. It is estimated that the benefit will reach approximately 600,000 low-income persons with disabilities.

The government has indicated that it recognizes the significant administrative burden of obtaining a Disability Tax Credit certificate, and that it will work with health and accounting professionals to find ways to increase uptake. The federal government is also calling on provincial and territorial governments to exempt these benefit payments from counting as income in relation to provincial or territorial supports. Clawback of this benefit by provincial and territorial governments would leave persons with disabilities no better off than they were prior to its development. The federal government is making this investment due to the inadequacy of disability assistance provided by many provinces, which currently leaves far too many persons with disabilities in poverty.

IncludeMe™: A New Online Training Program for Dementia Caregivers

IncludeMe™- A Starting Point for Dementia Caregivers is a new, innovative and free online training program for caregivers assisting their loved ones who experience dementia and Alzheimer's.

Making the journey into becoming a caregiver is full of complex challenges. IncludeMe™ seeks to give caregivers the information they need to take on their important responsibilities through self-directed, learn at your own pace modules.

It was developed by Iris the Dragon, the Mental Health Commission, the Alzheimer's Society of Leeds & Grenville, the Indigenous Diabetes Health Circle, and the Perth Community Foundation. These organizations aimed to build the program based on the real-life experiences of caregivers helping those that experience dementia and Alzheimer's.

IncludeMe™ addresses issues such as communication techniques, how to develop a practical care plan, and how to balance a self-care routine with caregiving responsibilities.

The program is free and purposefully built to be accessible. In total, it is about 60-90 minutes in length. Taking part just requires an internet-connected device.

For those that are interested, you can register to sign up by clicking [here](#). On their webpage, you'll also find access to a survey they're conducting for caregivers of people experiencing dementia. Participants may receive a \$50 gift card.

Petition to Double ODSP and OW Payments

by Eta Bereznai, Caregiver

A petition by Chris Glover MPP calls on the Ontario Government to immediately double the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and Ontario Works (OW) rates. As caregivers, we know that the current ODSP and OW payments are far below subsistence levels.

This is a stressful and unsustainable situation for our vulnerable loved ones to manage, one that doesn't adequately provide for life's necessities: healthy food, safe shelter, medication, and transportation.

These circumstances also place undue burdens on caregivers, as they are forced to subsidize the expenses of their vulnerable family members. This in turn negatively impacts their own mental, physical and emotional well-being. As well, there are disabled individuals whose families cannot provide financial help, leading to the excessive number of disabled and homeless people on our streets.

The negative impact of the current low level of ODSP and OW payments on recipients, and the subsequent effects on caregivers, cannot be overstated.

By signing and disseminating this petition at the website given below, we as caregivers can make our voices speak on behalf of our loved ones, ourselves, and our communities.

https://www.chrisglovermpp.ca/double_odsp_ow_rates

Opportunities to Contribute to Caregiver Focused Research

McMaster University Difficulty Swallowing and Caregiver Experience Study

The Aging Swallow Research Lab at McMaster University is looking for caregivers to participate in a study by sharing their experiences caring for those living with cognitive impairments. The study is researching the relation between swallowing difficulties of people living with cognitive impairments and the lived experiences of their caregivers.

Difficulty swallowing is identified in the study protocol as an independent predictor of an emotional and physical burden placed on caregivers. It is also experienced by over 90% of people living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.

Despite how common it is and the burden it places on caregivers, there currently is no method of identifying the specific challenges this creates for caregivers. This often leaves doctors with few ways to help caregivers supporting those experiencing cognitive impairments and difficulty swallowing.

Participation in this study is in person and will take place at McMaster University in Hamilton. You will be compensated with \$100, a clinical report, and your transportation may be covered up to \$100 total.

To participate, please contact the Aging Swallow Research Lab at their phone number: (289) 426-0843, or by email by clicking [here](#).

If you cannot participate in person but are a caregiver for a loved one living with dementia, you can take part in a 30 minute online survey by clicking [here](#).



Do you or does someone you love have a cognitive impairment?



We are assessing swallowing in people living with cognitive impairments.

If you are able to come to Hamilton, Ontario researchers at McMaster University invite you to participate in our study.

Compensation: \$100 and a clinical report

Transportation may be covered up to \$100 total.

CONTACT US TO PARTICIPATE

 **(289) 426-0843**

 **macasrl@mcmaster.ca**

If you are a caring for a loved one with dementia:

- You are able to participate in a 30-minute survey to help us better understand your caregiving experiences.

Compensation: \$40 gift card

Access the survey:



<https://redcap.lnk/dementiacaregivers>

This research study has been reviewed by the Hamilton Integrated Research Ethics Board under project #13766 (Version 4.3)



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.