

 **Ontario Caregiver Coalition**

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**This Family Caregiver Day, the Ontario Caregiver Coalition is Calling for Action**

(Toronto, Ontario, April 5, 2021) The Ontario Caregiver Coalition (OCC) is marking Family Caregiver Day, the first Tuesday in April, by calling on the government to take action to support unpaid caregivers. The pressures on caregivers have always been demanding, but even more so during the COVID-19 pandemic. Caregivers do not just want “thank you’s” – they want change.

Family caregivers play a critical role in the health care system filling the gaps to ensure the people they love get the care they need. This has been even more critical and more challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic. *“*Our system relies on the unpaid, unrecognized, and disrespected work of family caregivers to function,” says Samuel Schwisberg, Co-Chair of the Ontario Caregiver Coalition, “That is no longer sustainable.”

The Ontario Caregiver Coalition is calling on the government to address two issues:

* Financial support: Caregiving responsibilities often require people to take extended leaves from their jobs – or leave the job market entirely (https://www.ontariocaregivercoalition). Pre-pandemic, more than 1 in 5 caregivers spent 20 hours or more providing care ([Statistics Canada](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200108/dq200108a-eng.htm)) and more than 40% of caregivers faced financial hardship because of caregiving expenses ([Ontario Caregiver Organization](https://ontariocaregiver.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/OCO-Spotlight-report-English-Dec10.pdf)). 68% of caregivers said they need more financial support ([Statistics Canada](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200108/dq200108a-eng.htm)).
* Support for home and respite care: 95% of caregivers report that their time with other family and friends and 94% report their ability to take part in leisure or community activities have been reduced because of their caregiving responsibilities. Caregivers need greater access to flexible home and respite care and to be empowered through direct funding programs and family-managed care so they can get the support they need and deserve.

The Ontario Caregiver Coalition is also calling on caregivers to share their stories with us so we can advocate collectively and on their behalf. Caregivers should go to:

<https://www.ontariocaregivercoalition.ca> to sign up to join our efforts.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed just how necessary family caregivers are. Our long-term care system and congregate care settings struggled to operate without the additional support caregivers provide. Our hospital system is overwhelmed, and patients, particularly from underprivileged communities, rely on caregivers to be present to advocate for them. Many caregivers have opted to take on additional responsibilities at great personal cost rather than have home care workers who travel from patient to patient enter their home – if their loved one can even access home care at all. This Family Caregiver Day, thanking a caregiver is not enough. Caregivers want change.