

## OCC Think Tank

June 15, 2009

The Ontario Caregiver Coalition (OCC) works together around the issue of caregiver support in Ontario. Caregivers are individuals who provide care and assistance for their family members and friends who are in need of support because of physical, cognitive or mental health conditions.

The OCC assembled a diverse group of stakeholders to reflect on the needs of family caregivers and identify strategies to advance the interests of this important group of people in our society. The OCC set the context for family caregiving. Informing the discussion were two key presentations:

1. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) presented on the policy implications of its long range scenario planning
2. The Canadian Caregiver Coalition presented on the Canadian Caregiver Strategy Framework

Both identified key elements or priorities that need to be addressed to support family caregivers who typically do not perceive their contribution to a loved one as a burden, but yet often are compromised emotionally, physically and or mentally through protracted and complex caregiving. The priorities include:

1. Safeguarding the health and wellbeing of family caregivers and increasing the flexibility and availability of respite care
2. Minimizing excessive financial burden placed on family caregivers
3. Enabling access to user friendly information and education
4. Creating flexible workplace environments that respect caregiving obligations
5. Investing in research on family caregiving as a foundation for evidence-informed decision making

Participants deliberated on where to start in Ontario and identified three priorities for the OCC.

1. Align/attach to MOHLTC strategy/develop policy paper
2. Push for government to introduce financial measures
3. Examine existing successes/best practices in caregiver support AND work to raise the profile of family caregivers<sup>1</sup>

Specific actions for each priority were recommended and will be developed further by the OCC.

For more information on the Ontario Caregiver Coalition:

<http://www.ccc-ccan.ca/content.php?doc=48>

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<sup>1</sup> Two key priorities were tied for third place.