



Editorial

CRUSHING THE PEOPLE WHO CARE

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Family and friend caregivers are the bedrock of Ontario’s caring system. They are also the least valued by the Ontario government.

For almost five years now, Seniors for Social Action Ontario has urged this government to follow the lead of Newfoundland and Labrador and the government of the Northwest Territories and introduce a [Paid Family Caregiver Program](#). Doing so would help to ease the significant financial burden that caregivers face. Below is a graphic gratefully provided by the Ontario Caregiver Coalition, a partner organization of SSAO, showing that almost 80% of caregivers receive no financial assistance at all.



Contrast that with the [billions that the Ford government has directed to the predominantly for-profit long-term care industry](#) in Ontario that has consistently [failed to meet legislated standards for decades](#). And contrast it with the [questionable Home Care contracts](#) it is awarding.

Caregivers cannot afford to make huge [campaign contributions to the PC Party in Ontario to earn its loyalty](#). They cannot afford to hire [expensive lobbyists](#) to argue their case. Many are so exhausted they can barely manage to go out and buy groceries.

We simply cannot, on moral grounds, allow this to continue. We need to demand caregiver assistance in the forms that SSAO has been advocating for over 4 years now:

- Pay them! Introduce a Paid Family Caregiver option under Home Care as part of [Home Care Modernization](#).
- Take the cap off the number of Home Care hours their loved ones can receive by enhancing direct services, not just increased pay for Home Care workers.
- Expand [Hospital at Home Programs](#) across the province.
- Provide direct funding to those who care for older adults and end the discriminatory criteria that prevents them from accessing the [Family Managed Home Care](#) direct funding program.
- Fund integrated services and supports where people live through [PACE](#) (Program of All Inclusive Care of the Elderly) and [Hub and Spoke](#) Programs. Stop forcing caregivers and those they love to jump through one hoop after another trying to find any kind of support. They don't need more phone numbers. They need help.
- [Attach funding to the person not to the service providers](#) so that people can organize their own care, delivered by people they choose, at a time and place of their own choosing.
- For those caregivers who have become too exhausted to continue to care, create neighborhood-based [small, staffed community residences](#) to care for their loved ones. Staff apartments, condos, and family homes so that no one has to leave their own community to receive care. Needing residential care does not need to equal institutionalization. [Small community residences have existed in the U.S. for years](#). Why not in Ontario? Why are the only ones still institutionalized elders and criminals?
- Expand the [Adult Protective Services Program](#) and fund it through the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General, housing it in community legal clinics to provide independent system navigation and advocacy support to elders and their caregivers.

It is time the Ford government stopped funding its friends in the long-term care and Home Care industries and started to fund the beating heart of Ontario – its family caregivers who provide the bulk of caring services to elders in need - [over 4 million](#) out of 15 million Ontario residents.

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