For Immediate Release

Ontario Caregiver Organization supporting family caregivers with new resources and supports, Ontario Caregiver Helpline remains available 24/7

Toronto, ON, April 3, 2020 – Drawing upon its caregiver expertise and using expert and up-to-date guidance from health care partners, including the Ontario Ministry of Health and Public Health Ontario, The Ontario Caregiver Organization (OCO) is helping caregivers by adapting its existing programs and rolling out a suite of COVID-19 response resources to help caregivers including:

- A dedicated webpage to COVID-19
- Contingency planning checklist for caregivers
- Tip Sheets on supporting mental health and wellness, staying connected while maintaining physical distance and more
- Free webinars and 1-1 counselling sessions for Ontario caregivers
- Online peer support group with multiple sessions/week, including a young caregiver peer support group.
- Information on how to engage virtually and access free online arts, cultural and wellness material during periods of isolation and social distancing.
- Linking to and promoting provincial and federal information related to COVID-19.
- Continuing to provide the 24/7 Ontario Caregiver Helpline 1-833-416-2273 (CARE) and online chat available at www.ontariocaregiver.ca

New research released by The Ontario Caregiver Organization shows that about half (52%) of Ontario's family caregivers have a contingency plan should they become ill or need to self-isolate due to COVID-19. Elements of a caregiver contingency plan should include identifying who will step in as the primary caregiver, detailed documentation of the home care plan, list of medications, important healthcare and supports contact information and strategies for keeping the care recipient socially engaged.

"Family caregivers provide a significant amount of care, making it important that they have a contingency plan in place should they become ill or need to self-quarantine and we are here to help", says Amy Coupal, CEO, The Ontario Caregiver Organization. "This research is helping to identify the increased and changing supports and resources that caregivers need; supports we have worked quickly to develop that are now available through the Ontario Caregiver Organization".

The research also shows that 14 per cent of those surveyed are providing support only as part of the COVID-19 outbreak. This represents an increase in the number of family caregivers in Ontario due to COVID-19, from an estimated 3.3 million to an estimated 3.7 million. For the purposes of this study, caregivers are defined as people who support someone due to frailty, palliative care, long-term illness, long-term recovery from accident or surgery, degenerative disease, physical or mental health challenge, or old age-related disorder.

Other Research Findings:

- Almost 8 in 10 say it would be helpful to have tips on what they should be doing as a caregiver during COVID-19
- 3 in 4 caregivers say it would be helpful to have tips on how to keep the person they support engaged with others
- More than 2 in 3 say it would be helpful to have online / phone support for their own mental health

180 Dundas Street West, Suite 1425, Toronto, ON M5G 1Z8
T 416-362-2273 E info@ontariocaregiver.ca ontariocaregiver.ca

- More than 3 in 5 caregivers say it would be helpful to have access to a peer support group
- Forty-three percent of Ontario caregivers indicate they currently need financial support from their employers. This group also indicates a need for information about accessing federal and provincial financial support (36%) and information about employee benefits that can help them (34%).
- 8 in 10 caregivers understand how to practice social distancing while also providing care

More information is available at www.ontariocaregiver.ca

Research Methodology

Research was conducted by Leger on behalf of The Ontario Caregiver Organization, using an online survey of 500 Ontario Caregivers March 19 – 20, 2020. The margin of error for this study was +/-4.4%, 19 times out of 20.

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About The Ontario Caregiver Organization
The Ontario Caregiver Organization (OCO) exists to support Ontario's estimated 3.7 million caregivers; ordinary people who provide physical and/or emotional support to a family member, partner, friend or neighbour. The OCO will enhance the caregiving experience by providing one point of access to information, services and supports that empower and enable caregivers to be successful in their role. Where gaps exist in caregiver programs and services, the OCO partners with caregivers, health care providers and other organizations to find new and innovative ways to bridge those gaps so all caregivers, regardless of age, disease or geographical location have access to the help they need. Established in 2018, the OCO is a not-for-profit entity funded by the Government of Ontario.

Media Contact:
Danielle Van Duzer
Executive Lead, Communications
daniellev@ontariocaregiver.ca
437.232.4512