

Annual Report

2024/2025

A year of growth, connection, and impact—discover how Family Councils Ontario supported families, strengthened partnerships, and helped shape the future of long-term care.



Family
Councils
Ontario

Family Councils of Ontario is a registered charity.
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Funded by the Ontario Ministry of Long-Term Care.



In 2024–2025, Family Councils Ontario strengthened its role as a system partner, supporting families and long-term care homes through meaningful education, collaboration, and connection. With a focus on impact, innovation, and equity, we continued to champion the vital role of Family Councils in improving quality of life in long-term care.



2024/2025 A YEAR IN REVIEW



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LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

A message from CEO, Sam Peck



The FCO Team at our Connecting Through Care Event, June 2025

As I look back on this past year, I'm struck by how much momentum we've built together—and how clearly the path ahead is coming into focus. In October 2024, we launched our Innoweave project after applying the previous June, and it has already started to set the stage for future activities that will strengthen Family Councils across Ontario. This work is giving us the tools to support councils in ways that reflect the unique culture of each home, including Indigenous and culturally diverse communities, ensuring councils can thrive in every setting.

Over the past year, I've been fortunate to attend key sector events—including the Ontario Long-Term Care Association and AdvantAge Ontario conferences, and the Walk With Me conference in Ottawa. These gatherings provided us with opportunities to share FCO's knowledge and resources while connecting with partners who share our commitment to making long-term care truly resident-centred and full of joy for those who live, work, volunteer, and care within it.

None of this progress would be possible without our small but mighty team. I am deeply grateful for their creativity, collaboration, and dedication. Time and again, they show how a group of committed people can have an outsized impact across the sector.

This year, we also built new relationships with the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority (RHRA) and the Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence (CCCE), opening the door to deeper collaboration on issues that affect older adults and caregivers. We continued our strong partnerships with Ontario Association of Residents' Councils (OARC) and Ontario Caregiver Organization (OCO), strengthening our shared goals, and maintained close working relationships with the Ministry of Long-Term Care (MLTC)—not only as a funder but also as a critical policy partner. Through consultations, we've provided input on pharmacy services, inspection protocols and communications, and staffing changes and qualifications. I also had the opportunity to participate in MLTC investigator training to share how investigators can connect meaningfully with caregivers and councils.

As part of my role, I continue to serve on the MLTC Technical Advisory Table and sub-tables. While much of the work at those meetings is confidential, I can assure you that the perspectives of caregivers and councils are front and centre in every conversation. Regular meetings with the Assistant Deputy Ministers of both the Operations and Policy Divisions, as well as with the Minister and her office, ensure FCO's voice is present where it matters most.

Our events this year—including our webinars with CARP and our June 2024 conference—showcased the best of what we can do when we gather to learn and share together. I'm also especially proud of the continued success of our Navigation Guide, made possible through the generous support of the JBS Foundation. This resource is already helping families navigate one of life's most difficult transitions with clarity and compassion.

It's been a year of growth, connection, and laying strong foundations for the future. Together with our partners, funders, councils, and families, we are creating the conditions for Family Councils to thrive and for long-term care to be a place of dignity, joy, and community.



Sam Peck (she/they) is the Executive Director of Family Councils Ontario. For over 18 years, Sam has supported thousands of families and long-term care staff to strengthen collaboration and improve outcomes across the sector. Passionate about learning and leadership, Sam holds multiple post-graduate certificates in management, training, and development, and has completed a Voluntary Sector Management Certificate at Toronto Metropolitan University.

THE CRITICAL ROLE OF FAMILY COUNCILS

A message from Board Chair, Kathryn Pilkington

Each year, I find myself more inspired by the people behind Family Councils Ontario—our staff, Board, partners, and most importantly, the caregivers and Council members across the province. Their dedication reminds me that real change in long-term care comes from people who care deeply, who give their time, and who believe that every resident deserves dignity, joy, and connection. Together, we have built something remarkable, and I know the best is yet to come. As we look ahead, I am filled with hope for the future we are shaping—one where Family Councils are stronger than ever and where families, staff, and residents walk side by side to create homes where everyone thrives.

I want to begin by recognizing the incredible FCO staff team. Their compassion, adaptability, and commitment to families in long-term care continues to be a driving force behind everything we do. Whether responding to an emerging issue or delivering a well-established program, the FCO team meets each task with thoughtfulness and care. Their work is foundational to the success of Family Councils and to the organization as a whole.

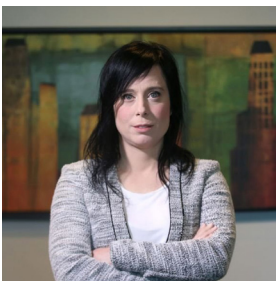
Our long-standing relationship with the Ministry of Long-Term Care remains a vital part of our work, both as a funding partner and as a collaborator in shaping public policy. We are grateful for the Ministry's continued support and trust, and for the opportunity to provide meaningful, caregiver-informed input on sector priorities and legislative changes. These conversations ensure that the voices of residents, families, and staff are present at the tables where decisions are made.



Looking ahead, FCO is working toward greater organizational efficiency through the Innoweave project. This initiative is helping us clarify our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), improve how we measure impact, and align our resources with the needs of our community. Collecting and analyzing strong data allows us to communicate our value to stakeholders, adapt our programming, and make decisions that reflect both the current state of the sector and our long-term goals.

We know that Family Councils play a critical role in Ontario’s long-term care system. As homes work to improve quality of care and quality of life, Councils are uniquely positioned to bring forward the perspectives of families and to support meaningful change. Their contributions—whether advocating for better communication, helping resolve concerns, or strengthening home culture—are an essential part of building safer, more responsive, and more compassionate care environments.

Family Councils Ontario is proud to support this work, and I am proud to be part of an organization that continues to evolve while staying true to its mission. Thank you for being part of this journey with us.



Kathryn Pilkington, Chair of the Family Councils Ontario Board, is a lawyer with deep expertise in policy development, government relations, and long-term care. A graduate of Osgoode Hall Law School, Brock University, and Niagara College, Kathryn has held senior leadership roles with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and AdvantAge Ontario. Her career, rooted in social services and mental health, reflects a lifelong commitment to improving care and advancing seniors’ issues across Ontario.

A Guide to Care:

Helping Families Navigate the Move to Long-Term Care

For many Ontario families, the decision to move a loved one into long-term care (LTC) is one of life's most emotional and complex transitions. Questions about the process, uncertainty about what to expect, and fears about losing connection are common—and often overwhelming. That's why Family Councils Ontario (FCO) created Making the Move to Long-Term Care: A Practice Navigation Guide for Ontario Families.

Developed in consultation with caregivers, long-term care staff, residents, and sector experts, the Navigation Guide offers practical, plain-language information for families preparing to enter Ontario's LTC system. The guide covers every stage of the journey—from how to apply and what to expect at move-in, to understanding residents' rights and staying meaningfully connected after placement.

Available in both English and French, the guide has been widely praised as a long-overdue resource that brings clarity, comfort, and confidence to families during a vulnerable time.

“All of us thought it was an outstanding product for family and friends of a loved one that may be destined to Long-Term Care. We all wished we had something like this a few years ago.”

— Family Council of Carleton Lodge, Ottawa

Download the Guide Today:



In English: hubs.ly/Q02TwYq10



En Français: hubs.ly/Q03cNFFWo



Meeting a Clear Need and Responding with Care

Since launching the guide, FCO has distributed 92 printed copies, with growing demand from caregivers, Family Councils, and long-term care professionals. Early recipients include 23 LTC homes that received copies by mail, and participants at sector events who were eager to bring the guide back to their communities. The impact has been immediate.

Social workers, in particular, have praised the guide's structure, accessibility, and usefulness. Ariel Kligerman, a Social Worker at Cedarwood Village in Norfolk County, wrote:

“Wow – what an amazing resource!! Such incredible info and having the QR codes to link to the different resources and forms within is an amazing addition... I think it would be amazing to hand it out when prospective residents/their families tour our home.”

The guide also caught the attention of Dr. Margaret Denton from the Hamilton Council on Aging, who featured it in an op-ed for The Hamilton Spectator. She noted its potential to reach readers across Ontario, calling the resource “impressive” and “essential reading” for older adults.

A Small Book with a Big Impact

Behind every copy of the Navigation Guide is a family facing uncertainty—and a system that often feels hard to navigate. This resource doesn't just explain the process; it brings calm, confidence, and a sense of partnership to the long-term care experience.

Thanks to the generous support of the JBS Foundation, the guide is already changing the way families access and understand long-term care in Ontario. With more editions planned and growing momentum across the province, FCO is proud to offer this small but mighty tool to the families who need it most.

“It is wonderful to have this comprehensive and informative guide available – I know it represents countless hours of careful work and will serve Ontario families well.”

— Caregiver participant, FCO webinar

STAFF UPDATE

Honoured to Lead, Excited to Grow

And just like that, another year has flown by. We packed in a lot of meaningful work leading up to this year-end report, and for me it's been the most exciting year since joining this amazing team in October 2021—especially as FCO celebrates its 10th Anniversary. Happy Birthday, FCO!

A major highlight has been the growth of our team. I am humbled to share that as of August 1st, 2025, I was appointed Deputy Director. In this role, I'll support Sam and provide leadership across strategic, operational, and external initiatives, ensuring alignment across departments and continuity in executive functions. I couldn't feel prouder or more excited about this new chapter.

A Growing Team

With our growing team, there are greater opportunities to extend our reach, focus on impact, and measure the outcomes of our resources, education, and coaching. One exciting initiative has been our Innoweave project, where we developed an Intended Impact Statement and Theory of Change. This five-year plan will strengthen our ability to track success and foster champions for sustainable family councils. Leading this project, I'm committed to keeping us on track, and I want to recognize the brilliant work of our Research/Education Manager, Cathleen Edwards, who is developing our champion model and supporting pilot homes.

Making the Move to Long-Term Care

Our Navigation Guide has taken off—we can't keep printed copies on the shelves. Caregivers across Ontario are using it to navigate the long-term care journey, and we continue to update it as the sector evolves. Thanks to Taeyeoung, our bilingual Events Manager, and the Ministry of Long-Term Care, the Guide is now available in French—an achievement we're very proud of.



More Demand

This year we've seen increased demand for presentations and consultations with councils and leadership teams. Why Family Councils Matter remains our most requested session, alongside growing interest in the Working Better Together workshop. Natacha and I also continue to support conflict resolution, working with homes and corporations to strengthen council–leadership relationships—support that many have told us has made a real difference.

Our Partnerships

We are grateful for ongoing partnerships with CLRI and Bruyère, now in the third run of the Palliative Care Series for Families and Caregivers. The Social Work/Social Service Community of Practice also continues to grow, with new guest speakers, an improved communication hub, and strong member engagement.

Looking Ahead

I look forward to stepping into this new role, supporting Sam and the team, and keeping pace with sector advancements while amplifying the voices of families. The rollout of our Innoweave action plan, and the growth and possibilities it brings, are truly exciting. My passion for long-term care continues to shine, and I am deeply grateful to work with FCO and this incredible team.

Cheers to 2025/2026!



Liane is passionate about making a difference in the lives of those living and working in long-term care. With nearly 20 years of experience as a Resident and Family Services Coordinator and Family Council Staff Liaison, she brings strong communication and support skills to her work. Trained in PIECES, U-First, and as a Gentle Persuasive Approach Coach, Liane's background in social work and person-centred care reflects her dedication to residents, families, and staff alike.

Stronger Councils, Stronger Care: The State of Family Councils in Ontario

Across the province, Family Councils continue to be a cornerstone of resident- and family-centered care in long-term care (LTC) homes. In 2024–2025, Family Councils Ontario (FCO) worked alongside hundreds of Family Councils and LTC staff to support more informed, collaborative, and resilient councils. From coaching and consultations to new provincial forums and educational events, FCO has remained focused on empowering caregivers—because strong Family Councils drive stronger outcomes for residents and staff alike.

Family Councils not only provide families with a voice but create space for dialogue, trust-building, and problem-solving. The past year reinforced how vital these spaces are, especially as homes continue to navigate change, resource pressures, and evolving expectations from caregivers.

Building Bridges Through Administrator Forums

This year marked the successful launch of FCO’s Administrator Forum—a new initiative designed and facilitated by Natacha Dupuis to strengthen communication and collaboration between home administrators and Family Councils. Held over six sessions with seven participants, the forum provided LTC leaders with a safe space to explore common challenges, ask questions, and learn from their peers.

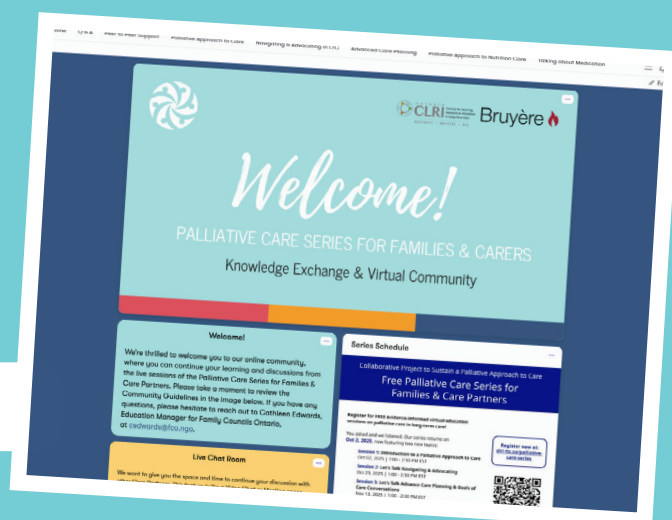
Through open conversation and strategic coaching, the forums helped homes better understand how to initiate or rebuild relationships with caregivers and Family Councils. As a result, four new Family Councils were formed directly because of the support received through the Administrator Forum. For administrators who had been uncertain about how to engage families, this initiative offered practical tools and renewed confidence.

JOIN OUR FORUMS

Our Administrator Forum and Ontario Council Network bring people together from across the province to share ideas, ask questions, learn from real experiences, and strengthen their councils with practical insights.



Link: surveymonkey.com/r/COS_reg



One-on-One Coaching: Ground-Level Support

Alongside the forums, FCO provided hands-on coaching to 10 homes, delivering a total of 27 personalized coaching sessions. These sessions tackled real-time challenges, ranging from internal Council conflict and leadership changes to navigating communication barriers with home staff. This work is deeply relational—meeting families and staff where they are, and helping them build practical pathways forward.

Through this coaching, FCO helped Councils revise their terms of reference, develop codes of conduct, and resolve longstanding disputes—ultimately reducing stress and improving Council sustainability. The sessions also highlighted how individualized support can make a tangible difference in the health of a Council and, by extension, the culture of a home.

Building Networks Across Ontario

An Update from Natacha Dupuis, Programs Director

This year has been deeply rewarding as I've seen firsthand the impact of Family Council Coaching across Ontario. Through our sessions, families have strengthened communication, clarified roles, and built a stronger sense of shared purpose. Many councils have established regular meeting structures, clear decision-making processes, and defined values that guide their work together. It's been inspiring to witness increased trust, better conflict resolution, and a renewed commitment to collaboration and long-term unity. In some cases, council members even developed formal governance documents to support ongoing accountability and continuity—an incredible step forward.

I've also had the privilege of supporting the Ontario Network as it begins to take shape. While still in its early stages, the group is creating meaningful spaces for dialogue between Family Councils and long-term care homes, focusing on transparency, dignity, and quality of care. My role has been to help guide and support the group as it builds confidence and independence, and I'm excited to see how it continues to grow in the months ahead.



Natacha is a Registered Social Service Worker with over two decades of experience supporting older adults in Northern Ontario. Beginning her career in retirement homes, she later served as Northern Ontario Area Manager for Osteoporosis Canada and co-chaired a regional falls prevention network. Natacha has worked with the Alzheimer Society of Sudbury and Manitoulin Island as a First Link Coordinator and Family Counsellor, providing compassionate, bilingual support to individuals and families affected by dementia.

Reimagining Impact:

Building a Stronger Future for Families in Long-Term Care

In October 2024, FCO began a bold process of reflection, strategy, and renewal. Supported by Innoweave and coach Valery Navarrete, we embarked on the Impact and Strategic Clarity (ISC) initiative: a nine-month deep dive into how our organization supports Family Councils across Ontario—and how we could do it even better.

Our work is urgent and growing. Since 2019, demand for our services has more than doubled, yet our staffing and resources remained largely unchanged. At the same time, Ontario's long-term care (LTC) sector is evolving. With more than 600 LTC homes and over 78,000 residents—many with increasingly complex needs—the role of caregivers, and the Family Councils that support them, has never been more critical.

Through the ISC process, we examined who we serve, what we do best, and how we can increase our impact. The result? A renewed purpose, a data-informed strategy, and a practical roadmap to guide us through the next 3–5 years.

Why This Work Matters Now

The ISC process came at the right moment. As the only organization in Ontario mandated to support Family Councils, FCO sits at the intersection of caregiving, policy, and systems change. Our community told us clearly: families are experiencing more stress, Council leadership is turning over faster, and relationships between families and home staff are becoming more complex.

We knew we needed to do two things:

1. Clarify our impact. What difference are we really making—and how do we know?
2. Invest wisely. With limited resources, how can we be more focused and effective?

Guided by Innoweave's process and informed by extensive research, FCO used this opportunity to pressure test our assumptions and re-center our efforts around measurable, meaningful outcomes.



Listening, Learning, and Co-Creating a Way Forward

Between February and April 2025, we hosted focus groups, interviews, and a province-wide survey (n=107) with Family Council members, LTC staff, sector leaders, and other stakeholders. We also conducted a literature review of sector trends and best practices. What we heard validated much of what we suspected—and gave us new clarity:

65% of stakeholders agreed it's appropriate for FCO to aim for 75–80% of LTC homes having effective Family Councils.

84% agreed with the concept of creating a “Champion” model—a new role to help grow and sustain Councils by mentoring others and building internal leadership.

There is strong sector support for measuring our progress, reporting back more frequently, and sharing learnings from our work.

We also surfaced critical truths: the average length of stay in long-term care is now just 18 months. That gives Family Councils very little time to recruit, organize, and begin having an impact. With frequent membership turnover and rising emotional labour among caregivers, supports must be quick, clear, and sustainable.

From Ideas to Action: Our New Strategic Roadmap

The Innoweave process helped us define clear outcomes, and now we're putting them into practice. Here's what we're building next:

1. Champion Model (Pilot Launch: Early 2026): We'll develop and pilot a “Champion” model that supports Family Councils in at least 75% of Ontario LTC homes. These Champions—family members, staff, or even alumni caregivers—will receive specialized training and support to help Councils form, grow, and thrive.

2. Inclusive Service Expansion: We'll conduct an environmental scan to better serve Ontario's diverse population. That means reviewing all FCO resources, setting accessibility goals, and expanding support for Francophone, racialized, 2SLGBTQ+, and newcomer caregivers.

3. Data-Driven Impact: We're adopting new Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and data systems to better measure our effectiveness. From coaching sessions to Council formation to conflict resolution, we'll track the impact—not just the activity.

4. Amplifying the Voice of Family Councils: We'll set clearer research and policy priorities informed by the voices of Councils and caregivers. This includes building reporting systems that let us return insights to our community and influence sector-wide change.

Clarifying Our Mission

As part of our Innoweave process, we took the time to deeply examine why we do this work, reflecting on the core purpose and values that guide everything we do. We explored what success truly looks like—not just in terms of outputs, but in the meaningful, lasting impact we hope to have on families, residents, and long-term care communities. This process helped us clarify our goals, align our efforts, and envision the change we strive to create.

What is an Intended Impact Statement?

An Intended Impact Statement is a concise summary of the long-term change an organization commits to creating. It helps define success, align internal resources, and communicate that vision clearly to partners, funders, and families.

This statement guides every part of our work. It affirms our belief that strong, supported Councils lead to stronger homes—and that our role is to make that happen by offering practical, measurable support.

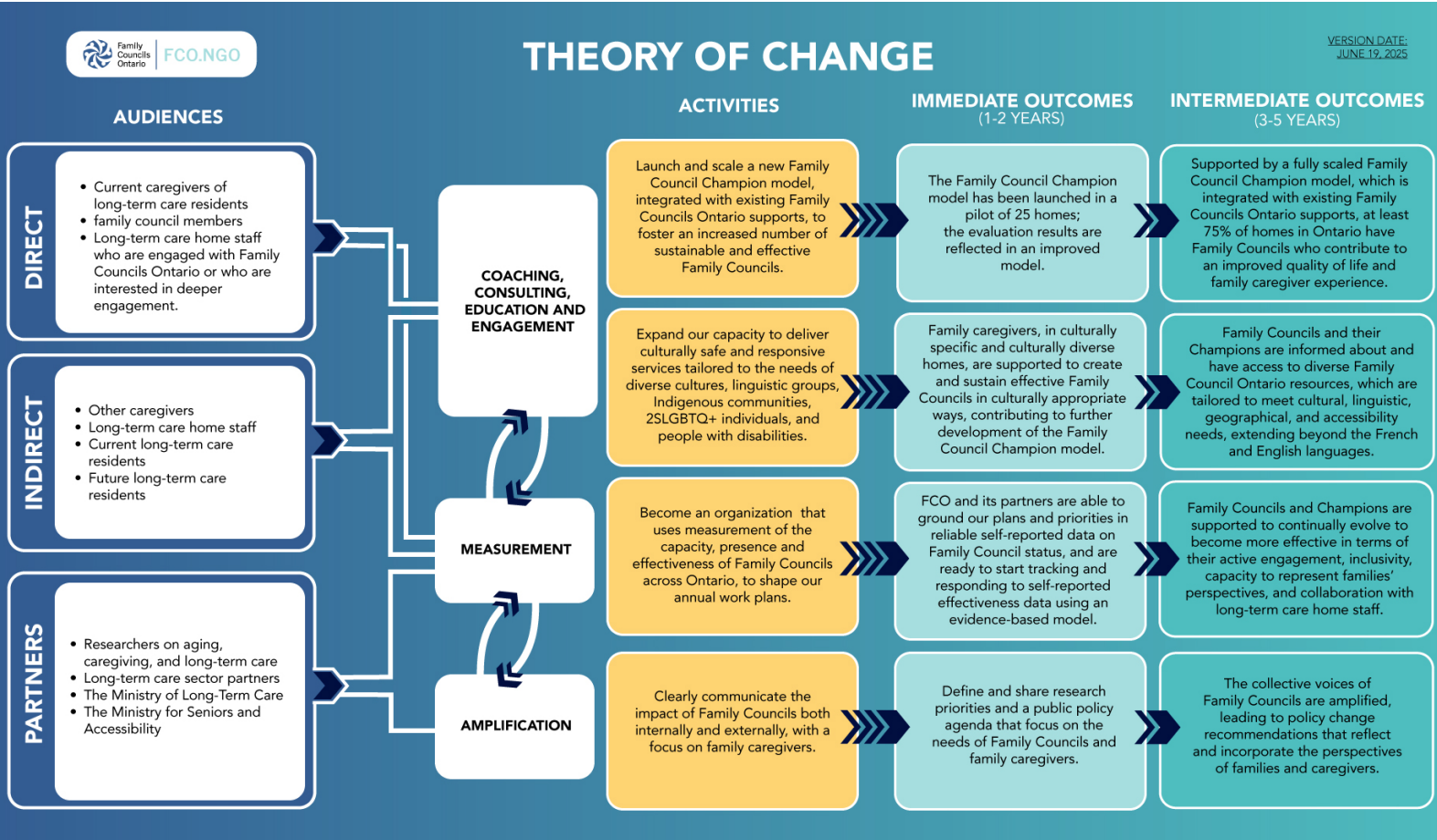
FCO's Intended Impact Statement

Family Councils Ontario (FCO) will partner with family caregivers and long-term care (LTC) champions in fostering sustainable and effective family councils (FCs) with a goal of having councils in 75% of long-term care homes in Ontario by 2030 — each one working to improve residents' quality of life and the family caregivers experience through collaboration and transparent communication, within the FC and with the home. As we continue to support FCs, we will evolve into an organization which better tracks and measures elements of success and shares these with our community.

Our approach will include coaching, education, and meaningful opportunities for connection to help councils grow stronger, be more inclusive, and promote a sense of belonging. Working together with champions and our sector partners, we will amplify the collective voices of family councils, leading to new research and policy change recommendations in LTC that reflect and incorporate the perspectives of families and caregivers.

What is a Theory of Change?

A Theory of Change is a visual roadmap that shows how our work leads to the outcomes we care about. It maps the link between our programs and our goals—outlining which actions lead to which changes, and why.



While the full diagram continues to evolve, here's a high-level summary of our approach:

Activities: FCO provides coaching, conflict resolution, educational resources, networking, and policy advocacy.

Short-Term Outcomes: Family Council members are more confident, informed, and connected; LTC staff better understand their role in supporting Councils.

Medium-Term Outcomes: More effective, inclusive, and sustainable Family Councils exist in LTC homes.

Long-Term Impact: A culture of collaboration between families and staff; improved quality of life for residents; stronger, more accountable long-term care homes

Together, our Intended Impact Statement and Theory of Change help us stay focused, measure what matters, and respond more effectively to the people we serve.

What's Next—and How You Can Help

Our next steps are already underway. We're evaluating our current programs and services against our new strategy. We'll begin piloting the Champion model and formalizing our new measurement approach. And we'll keep listening—because this process, at its heart, is about staying responsive to the people we serve.

The journey reminded us of something essential: real change happens through relationships. Our staff, Board, sector partners, funders, and—most importantly—Family Councils have played a critical role in shaping what comes next. We're not just retooling programs; we're building a stronger foundation for caregiver engagement, resident advocacy, and system accountability.

As Ontario's LTC landscape continues to shift, FCO is ready—with clearer goals, stronger tools, and a renewed commitment to ensuring every Family Council has what it needs to thrive.

Family Council **CHAMPION**

What is the Family Council Champions Project?

Through training, peer support, and shared learning, Champions will serve as local leaders who help Councils navigate challenges, share best practices, and build stronger relationships with LTC home staff and residents' families. The project is rooted in FCO's Innoweave-supported journey to define clear goals, measure impact, and create sustainable systems that enhance the voice and effectiveness of Family Councils throughout Ontario.

Do You Know a Family Council Champion?

A Family Council Champion is someone who goes above and beyond to support their Family Council and long-term care community. They bring people together, share knowledge, and help strengthen the connection between families, residents, and staff. Champions inspire collaboration, encourage participation, and make a meaningful difference in improving the quality of life in long-term care homes.

If you, or someone you know, fits this description, we invite you to join us as a partner in this exciting pilot initiative. You can contact us directly by emailing Taryn Jacquard, FCO Administrative Coordinator — tjacquard@fco.ngo.



A Year of Innovation and Connection

An Update from Cathleen Edwards, Education and Research Manager

The highlight of 2024/2025 was the launch of our navigation guide “Making the Move to Long-Term Care: A Practical Navigation Guide for Ontario Families.” I was thrilled to share this new resource in a webinar hosted by the Ontario Caregiver Organization and through a presentation at the 2024 OLTCOA This is Long-Term Care Conference.

We also co-presented a session at the same conference with the Ontario Centres for Learning, Research and Innovation Collaborative Project on the Palliative Care Educational Series for Families and Carers.

October 2024 was a busy month with the launch of our pilot online knowledge exchange network for Family Councils, creating opportunities for members to share best practices, network, and access new resources to support their work. I was also invited to write an article about our navigation guide for the Spring/Summer 2025 edition of the OLTCOA Magazine.

Looking ahead to FCO’s 10th birthday, I’m excited to help plan our in-person Conference in Hamilton, including two FCO-led sessions: “How Family Councils Can Support New Caregivers” & “Build Connections in Their Long-Term Care Community: Family Councils Ontario as a Support to Family Councils”.

I was proud to support our DIERAC Committee in co-creating and leading the session Belonging in Your Family Council at the conference.

In 2025/2026, I look forward to playing a key role in developing the resources, design, and implementation work stemming from our Innoweave Impact Statement project.



Cathleen brings her passion for supporting families and fostering inclusion from her work as a Recreation Professional in long-term care. She holds an Honours BHK from the University of Windsor and an MA in Health & Physical Education from Brock University, with extensive experience teaching and coordinating programs in gerontology, physical education, and recreation.

Connecting Through Care:

How FCO's Events Brought the LTC Community Together

Family Councils Ontario's (FCO) events this year were more than just workshops and webinars — they were spaces of connection, learning, and shared purpose. Over 2024–2025, FCO hosted 17 presentations and workshops, in collaboration with our long-term care Sector Partners, and reached thousands of caregivers, LTC staff, and sector leaders across Ontario.

Our events reflect a growing, energized community committed to improving life in LTC. They also show how knowledge-sharing, storytelling, and training can empower caregivers to lead change within their homes and across the system. The highlight of the year? A two-day hybrid conference held in Hamilton in June 2025.

2025 Family Council Conference

Held at the Hamilton Waterfront Conference Centre on June 11–12, *Connecting Through Care: Creating Champions* brought together Family Council members, LTC staff, and community partners for two days of education, collaboration, and renewal. The conference featured rich, diverse programming led by caregivers, professionals, and subject matter specialists alike.

Opening Keynote Video:

Unlocking the Power of Champions



Jill Proud, a renowned leadership coach, opened the conference with an energizing keynote on cultivating champions in LTC. Her message emphasized that leadership isn't a title—it's a way of being—and that Family Councils have a unique role in leading positive change from within.



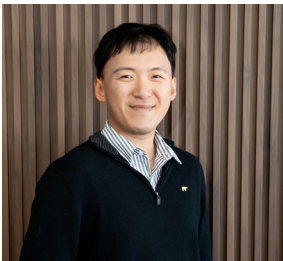
Building Skills and Community Across Ontario

An Update from Taeyeoung Jung, Events Manager

This year has clearly demonstrated that knowledge sharing, skill-building, and both professional and personal development remain central to the long-term care community. We successfully hosted our two significant annual events: Connecting Through Care, the Family Councils Ontario conference held in June, which featured two and a half days of dynamic programming, and our Innovation Summit in November, a focused online event held over the course of an afternoon.

In addition to these major events, we offered a wide range of webinars throughout the year, partnering with professional organizations such as CARP Ottawa, Dying with Dignity, the Ontario Caregiver Organization, and the Ministry of Long-Term Care.

While attendance numbers varied across events, the level of engagement from participants was consistently high. Attendees showed a genuine eagerness to learn and connect, and our recorded sessions on YouTube have continued to reach a broad and interested audience.



Taeyeoung Jung (he/him), originally from Montreal, holds a political science degree from the University of Montreal. Now based in Toronto, he is FCO's event and project manager. With experience in project management, public policy, and communications across community and non-profit settings, he brings strong skills and enthusiasm to this role.

Celebrating Champions: 2025 FCO Award Winners

At the heart of every Family Council is a group of people working tirelessly—often quietly—to create more compassionate, inclusive, and responsive long-term care homes. At the Creating Champions Conference in June 2025, Family Councils Ontario proudly recognized three outstanding recipients who exemplify what it means to lead with care, courage, and commitment.



Staff Champion Award – Sue Walsh

Sue has gone above and beyond in supporting families and strengthening the Council at her home. Her leadership, compassion, and unwavering support of resident well-being make her an incredible champion for person-centred care.



Dedicated Family Council Member Award – Nicole Landriault

Nicole's heartfelt storytelling, advocacy, and commitment to improving the lives of residents and families at King Nursing Home have made a lasting impact. Her voice represents the strength and resilience of caregivers across Ontario.



Outstanding Family Council Award – Granite Ridge Family Council

This Family Council is a shining example of collaboration, creativity, and persistence. From engaging with home leadership to supporting one another through challenges, their work continues to build a stronger and more connected community.

Please join us in congratulating our 2025 award winners, and thank you to everyone who makes Family Councils a place of support, empowerment, and positive change!

A Decade of Growth, A Legacy of Care:

The Story of Family Councils Ontario

FCO's TIMELINE

2010 Family Council Day launched in 2010 and has since grown into Family Council Week, an annual celebration of Family Councils in long-term care.

2013 We introduced the Family Council Member of the Year Award and hosted our first province-wide conference, now our signature biennial event.

2015 Family Councils Ontario became an independent charitable organization in January 2015.

2018 Increased Ministry of Long-Term Care funding allowed us to expand our team and better support Family Councils and LTC staff.

TODAY We now support Family Councils, caregivers and long-term care staff across Ontario, working closely with sector and government partners to help improve long-term care for everyone involved.

This year, as Family Councils Ontario celebrates a decade as an independent organization—and over 25 years of service to families in long-term care—we pause to reflect on how far we've come. What began as a grassroots movement has grown into a province-wide organization that supports over 500 Family Councils and thousands of caregivers and long-term care home staff each year. The journey of FCO is, in many ways, the story of how families in Ontario came together to speak with one voice—and how that voice has helped shape the future of care.

Why Family Councils Started

In the late 1990s, families in long-term care homes across Ontario began asking a simple but powerful question: Who supports the caregivers? Once a loved one entered long-term care, families often found themselves navigating a complex system alone and uncertain where to turn for guidance, connection, or meaningful influence on the care being provided.

At the same time, the LTC sector was undergoing major changes. More and more residents were entering homes with cognitive impairments such as dementia, and the need for strong, sustained family involvement grew rapidly. For those who could no longer speak for themselves, family members, friends, and caregivers became their voices. In turn, these caregivers needed support, tools, and space to come together.

That space became the Family Council.

Our Roots: From Pilot Project to Provincial Voice

Ontario's Family Councils' Program—now known as Family Councils Ontario—began in 1998 as a pilot project funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Sparked by a need identified by Concerned Friends of Ontario Citizens in Care Facilities, the project was housed within The Self-Help Resource Centre and focused on providing families with the tools and training to form independent, empowered councils within LTC homes.

The program received funding from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) in 2004 and grew steadily in scope and reach. For over a decade, it served as a crucial lifeline for family caregivers—helping new councils form, resolving conflict, building communication skills, and advocating for residents' quality of life.

In November 2015, the Family Councils Program officially became Family Councils Ontario—an independent, charitable non-profit organization funded by the Ministry of Long-Term Care. With this transition came greater autonomy, a renewed mission, and a stronger voice at provincial tables.

Where We Are Today

Family Councils Ontario is now a central pillar in Ontario's long-term care landscape. We support Family Council members and staff, by offering education, tools, workshops and events. We maintain strong partnerships with the Ministry of Long-Term Care, operators, researchers, and community organizations.

From helping a Council resolve conflict, to supporting administrators in building trust with families, to hosting provincial events where caregivers share knowledge—we are always working to elevate the voice of families and strengthen the culture of care in LTC.

Our team is regularly consulted on policy, legislation, and research. We bring the experiences of Family Councils directly into conversations that shape Ontario's LTC system—and we are proud to be known for amplifying real stories and real solutions.

Where We're Going

As we look ahead, the story of Family Councils Ontario is still being written. Our recent Innoweave Strategic Clarity Process gave us a clear roadmap for the future—one that focuses on measurable impact, equity, and innovation. We are piloting a Champion model to increase the presence of effective councils in LTC homes, launching new French-language and culturally inclusive materials, and growing our online learning and community platforms

Family Councils remain a powerful mechanism for positive change in long-term care. Our goal is to ensure every home has an active, supported, and confident Council—and that every caregiver has the tools they need to show up with strength, clarity, and hope.

A Creative First Year

What a whirlwind of a first year with FCO! It's been an exciting and creative journey filled with learning, collaboration, and growth.

On the design side, this year has been all about building tools that make a difference—most notably, the Navigation Guide, which continues to evolve as a key resource for families navigating long-term care. Alongside that, we've been developing new digital systems to help us report more effectively and use data to better understand and support Family Councils across the province.

Partnerships have also been a major highlight. I've had the opportunity to connect with members of the long-term care community, including Ontario Association of Residents' Councils, and Elderado, building relationships that strengthen our collective impact.

Looking ahead, the focus will be on deepening these partnerships and creating more formal connections across the sector. We'll also continue integrating our online tools to make our team's work even more efficient and connected. It's been an incredible first year, and I'm excited for what's next as we keep finding new ways to support families and strengthen councils across Ontario.



With twenty years in non-profits, Ioan Williams brings deep experience in community engagement and digital storytelling to FCO. Known for creating compelling, accessible content, Ioan strengthens campaigns and connections across diverse audiences. At FCO, they will enhance digital tools, build community, and support a more connected, inclusive environment for families across Ontario.

What Does the Future Look Like?

As Family Councils Ontario looks ahead to 2025–2026, we do so with clarity, purpose, and optimism. The past year has been one of reflection and renewal —laying the groundwork for future growth, smarter impact tracking, and deeper support for the families and councils we serve. Now, with a stronger foundation in place, we're focused on scaling up what works, innovating where needed, and staying grounded in our mission to empower family caregivers and improve the long-term care experience across Ontario.

New Tools, New Projects, New Possibilities

In 2025–2026, FCO will develop and release several new tools and resources to help councils thrive:

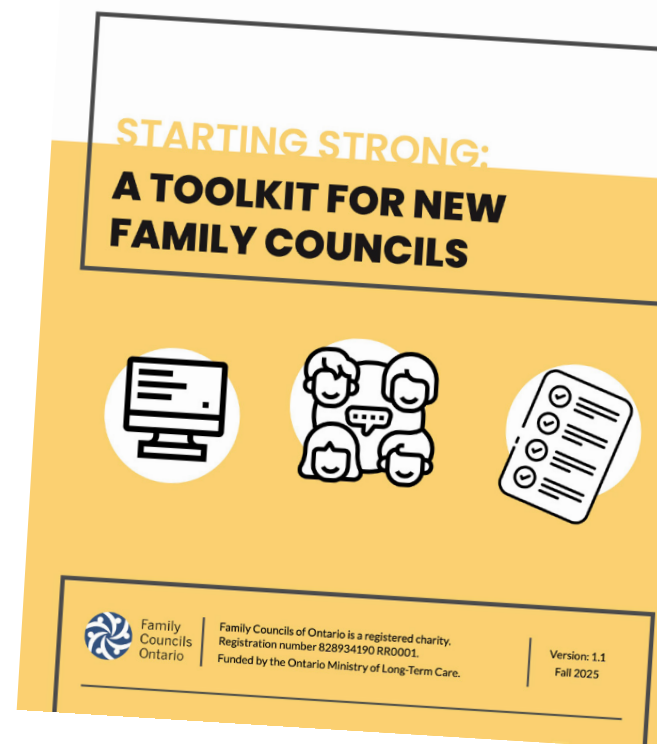
A self-paced online course based on the Navigation Guide to Long-Term Care, designed for caregivers navigating placement decisions.

A companion toolkit for LTC staff, helping homes better understand how to work with Family Councils and support family engagement.

Evaluation tools for Councils to self-assess and improve their functioning over time.

New onboarding kits, digital resource cards, and eLearning modules focused on conflict resolution, equity, and leadership development within councils.

We're also exploring co-branded versions of our core resources with partners in other provinces, with the long-term goal of developing a national framework for Family Council support.



Smarter, More Strategic Support

The completion of our Innoweave Strategic Clarity process marks a turning point for FCO. Armed with a renewed Intended Impact Statement and Theory of Change, we are better positioned to deliver targeted, responsive services that meet the real needs of Family Councils in Ontario.

Our next steps include:

Piloting new support models, including our Council Champion program, which will train and equip local champions—family members, staff, or community members—to initiate, sustain, and strengthen Family Councils in their homes and regions.

Tracking both the existence and effectiveness of Family Councils, not just their presence. We want to understand how Councils function, what supports they need, and what conditions lead to success —so we can share that knowledge sector-wide.

Expanding equity-focused practices, including offering new multilingual and culturally inclusive materials, and ensuring our support reflects the diverse realities of Ontario families.

What does the future look like? It looks more confident, with better-supported Family Councils. It looks like caregivers who are not alone — but connected, resourced, and empowered. It looks like a long-term care system that values partnership, builds trust, and puts families at the center of quality care.

With every new project, tool, and connection, we're working toward that vision. The future of Family Councils is strong—and Family Councils Ontario is proud to help shape it.

We invite you to be part of this journey. Whether you're a caregiver, staff member, partner, or supporter—there's a role for you in strengthening Family Councils. Join a Council. Start a conversation. Share your story. And help us continue building a long-term care system that reflects the dignity, compassion, and connection every person deserves.

Together, we are improving quality of life in long-term care.

Get Involved with Family Councils Ontario

Whether you're a caregiver, long-term care staff member, or someone who believes in the power of families to lead change—there's a way for you to be part of the movement.

Join or Start a Family Council

Looking to connect with others in your LTC home?
We can help you form or strengthen a Council.

Access Resources and Training

Explore our Navigation Guide, attend a webinar, or book a consultation.

fco.ngo/resources

Become a Champion

Are you ready to mentor or support other councils? Learn about our upcoming Champion pilot. Stay tuned for more details in 2025!

Partner with Us

Are you part of a LTC home, sector organization, or municipality? Let's collaborate.

fco.ngo/partnerships

Donate to Support Our Work

Help us keep all resources free and accessible to families. Every donation helps us reach more homes.

fco.ngo/donate