



CAOT  ACE

Canadian Association of Occupational Therapy

Annual Report 2024-2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

02

Land
Acknowledgment

03

Board Chair's
Leadership
Message

04

CEO's
Leadership
Message

05

Celebrating
CAOT's
100th
Anniversary

06

Who
We Are
and What
We Do

07

Cutting-Edge
Career Training

Professional
Development

08

Truth
and
Reconciliation

Advocacy

09

Influencing
Change

Advocacy

10

Promoting
Occupational
Therapy in
Canada

Advocacy

11

Increasing
Public
Awareness

Communications
+ Marketing

13

Support
for your
Practice

Practice
Resources

15

Keeping
You Informed

Practice
Resources

16

Research
into
Action

Knowledge
Translation

18

Building
Community

Celebrating
OTs + OTAs

19

Largest
OT Gathering

CAOT
Conference

20

Celebrating
Excellence

2025
Awards

22

Collective
Voices

CAOT
Chapters

24

Safeguarding
the Profession

Quality Education
+ Accreditation

25

Financial
Highlights
2024-2025

26

CAOT
Acknowledgments

Board + Committee
Chairs

27

CAOT
Acknowledgments

Staff



LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We gratefully acknowledge the Indigenous peoples who have taken care of the land since time immemorial and who continue to call this land home. We prepared this report on the traditional, unceded, unsundered territory of the Algonquin Anishnaabeg people who have taken care of the land and waters in what we now call Ottawa.

CAOT's Board of Directors and staff recognize that colonialism has resulted in generational trauma, racism, and loss of culture, language, and traditions for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people that impact health outcomes, occupational possibilities, and occupational participation still today.

It is a journey to learn, unlearn, and relearn the history and impacts on Indigenous peoples, and how we can take steps in our personal and professional lives towards truth and reconciliation. We recognize that we still have much to learn – truth and reconciliation are an ongoing process for us all.





Board Chair's Leadership Message

Lisa Diamond-Burchuk,
BScOT, MScOT, OT Reg. (MB)

As Board Chair, I am filled with immense pride as I reflect on this pivotal moment in our association's history. We stand at the threshold of CAOT's 100th anniversary – a century of occupational therapists (OTs) and occupational therapist assistants (OTAs) transforming lives, advancing the profession, and building healthier communities across Canada.

This past year has been one of intentional preparation for our centennial, marked by important governance decisions. The Board waived membership fees for retired OTs during our centennial year as a tangible expression of gratitude that recognizes the invaluable contributions of those who built CAOT's foundation.

We also refreshed our identity with a new logo design that celebrates our Canadian heritage while paying tribute to the ward aides whose groundbreaking work with World War I veterans established occupational therapy as a profession in Canada. The return to our original name – the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapy – honours our 1926 roots while reflecting our commitment to create a more inclusive space for OTAs and strengthen public understanding of occupational therapy as a unified profession.

As an OT with 35 years of experience and a long-time CAOT member and volunteer, I have been proud to witness our profession's remarkable evolution and the important role played by the association. CAOT's work continues to be guided by four strategic priorities: mobilizing strategic partners for equitable and accessible health and social systems, advancing relationship-focused occupational therapy practice and innovation, supporting OTs and OTAs as leaders and influencers, and nourishing a thriving and inclusive occupational therapy community and workforce. As we enter our second century, these commitments position us to meet evolving healthcare challenges while remaining grounded in the values that have sustained us for 100 years.

Your membership made significant accomplishments possible this year. We launched free primary care learning modules and introduced self-directed online professional development courses. We expanded CarFit

programming to reach drivers across five provinces while training close to 200 occupational therapy students. Our open-access initiatives also grew significantly, with the readership of *Occupational Therapy Now* increasing by 113% and *Conversations that Matter: The Podcast* gaining 602% more listeners with content in English and French.

The accomplishments detailed in this annual report demonstrate how CAOT has supported the breadth and depth of occupational therapy practice across Canada this past year. From advocacy victories, new practice resources, and innovative professional development courses to the strengthening of partnerships with Indigenous leadership and updated exam resources, CAOT supports the vibrant community of occupational therapy practitioners who serve communities across Canada.

The year ahead promises to be extraordinary. CAOT Conference 2026 in Tiohtià:ke|Mooniyang/Montréal will be more than our annual gathering—it will be a celebration of a century of innovation, resilience, advocacy, and impact. It will be a moment to honour those who built this profession while inspiring the next generation of occupational therapy professionals to carry the work forward.

As we celebrate our centennial, I am deeply grateful to every member who has contributed to this association's journey—current and past Board members and staff who shaped CAOT, the volunteers who helped expand our reach and drive our work forward, and the thousands of practitioners who embody occupational therapy's values in their daily practice. Your commitment to the profession, your dedication to your clients and communities, and your engagement with CAOT ensure that our second century will be as impactful as our first.

Here's to 100 years of occupational therapy excellence in Canada, and to the next 100 years of possibility.





CEO's Leadership Message

Irving Gold,
M.Crim., M.Soc.

A little more than a year ago, I stepped into my role at CAOT with great respect for occupational therapy and genuine curiosity about both the profession and the association that serves it.

I'd worked alongside OTs during my leadership roles with other healthcare organizations, so I knew the fundamentals. What I couldn't have grasped from the outside was the depth, nuance, and sophistication of what you do every day and how fundamentally it determines whether people can participate in their own lives.

I've spent the past year listening and learning directly from you. I've met with hundreds of OTs, OTAs, and students from across the country, and visited universities, hospitals, Indigenous communities, health centres, and a variety of clinical settings. I had countless conversations at our annual Conference and read your "Ask for OT" advocacy submissions. I sat in meetings with politicians, policymakers, and coalitions where your expertise and impact were the substance of the conversation.

Through all of this, two things became clear: the profound impact of what OTs and OTAs do when the system integrates occupational therapy effectively, and the significant gaps that remain when it doesn't. People struggle to maintain employment, housing, and relationships. Independence becomes harder to sustain. Mental health challenges compound. Physical conditions worsen without functional support. Social isolation deepens. Emergency departments see the same patients cycling through crisis interventions that stabilize acute symptoms but don't address the daily living challenges that brought them there in the first place.

These gaps represent an enormous opportunity—for better patient outcomes, for more sustainable healthcare delivery, and for the system to realize the full value of occupational therapy. My job, along with our Board, staff, and volunteers, is to help close those gaps by ensuring decision-makers understand what you do and why it matters.

Here's what your membership investment delivered this year: CAOT had advocacy victories that included the removal of Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) certification barriers blocking OTs from serving First Nations and

Inuit communities. We kept Student Loan Forgiveness on Parliament's agenda and demanded inclusion on behalf of our members. We made *Occupational Therapy Now* open access, increased the *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy's* impact factor and reach, and launched a multi-year, large-scale project for internationally educated OTs.

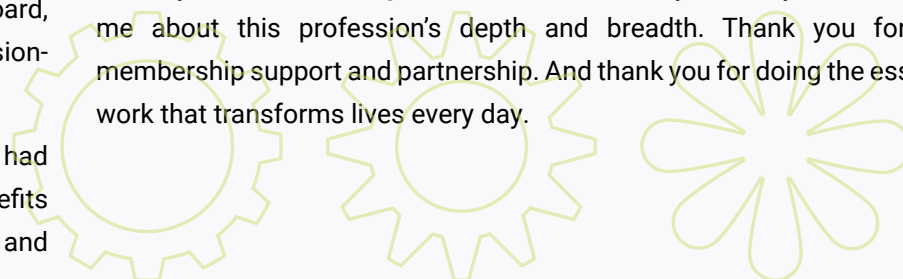
Other critical steps included strengthening partnerships with Indigenous leadership on Jordan's Principle reform and continuing to update the National Occupational Therapy Certification Exam (NOTCE) to reflect the 2021 Competencies for Occupational Therapists in Canada. Additionally, we created a searchable database of economic evidence research for occupational therapy and launched the Canadian OT Grad Guide, so students can start their careers with clarity and confidence.

I'm also personally committed to ensuring that Francophone members have the programming, resources, and services they need in French, and that OTAs see CAOT as working for them across every province and territory, at every career stage, and in every practice setting.

These accomplishments aren't PR wins. They're operational changes, policy gains, and resources that remove barriers to your practice, equip you with evidence, increase public awareness, and amplify your voice in rooms where you should have always been heard.

I'm honoured to represent this association as we celebrate CAOT's centennial. I'm committed to fighting for the recognition and resources the profession deserves—not because I've been doing this work for decades, but because I now fully understand what the healthcare system gains when it fully integrates occupational therapy.

Thank you for welcoming me into this community. Thank you for teaching me about this profession's depth and breadth. Thank you for your membership support and partnership. And thank you for doing the essential work that transforms lives every day.



CELEBRATING CAOT'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY

Honouring our Past, Embracing our Future

With the celebration of CAOT’s centennial anniversary in 2026, the timing was ideal to launch a consultation and design process over the past year to refresh our identity, including a new logo and name change. These updates honour our history while positioning us for the next 100 years of advancing occupational therapy in Canada.

The Board of Directors also agreed to waive the annual membership fee for retired OTs for the anniversary year. As we honour a century of occupational therapy excellence, this decision recognizes the invaluable service of our retired members and their enduring contributions to our profession in a tangible way.

New Name: Returning to our Roots

Our association was originally named the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapy when it was founded in 1926 and incorporated in 1934. In 1963, the name was changed to the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, and in 1971, we added l’Association canadienne des ergothérapeutes to reflect our commitment to bilingualism.

Historical records don’t tell us exactly why we made that shift from “Therapy” to “Therapists” in 1963, but it was a time of significant change for the organization. CAOT’s constitution was revised, Life Memberships were introduced, and the Board governance was being modernized. Then in 1966, Thelma Cardwell became our first OT President – a milestone that signaled growing professional autonomy and put the spotlight firmly on practitioners themselves.

Fast forward to today, the Board of Directors has decided to return to our roots by changing CAOT’s name back to “The Canadian Association of Occupational Therapy” to better reflect both OTs and OTAs working together under the occupational therapy umbrella, create a more welcoming space for OTAs in our association, and strengthen public understanding of occupational therapy as a unified profession.

New Logo: Honouring our Heritage through Design



Over the past 100 years, the association has had four logos, with the original version adopted in 1934, including the Latin phrase “Permentem et manus ad sanitatem,” meaning “through mind and hand to health.” It remained in use until 1963, when it was updated following the name change.

Then, a new design was unveiled in 1968 to reflect the association’s commitment to bilingualism through the use of “L’ACE,” the abbreviation for l’Association canadienne des ergothérapeutes.

This version remained in place for nearly four decades until 2004, when the logo was updated to include a red maple leaf and images of people interacting to symbolize the dynamic relationships OTs have with their clients as they enable occupation.

Following a series of consultations with OTs, OTAs, and students last year, a new logo was selected by CAOT’s Board. It uses bright blue, rounded typography and a fluid, green maple leaf shape that grounds the association in its Canadian identity with a warm, approachable feel, while balancing professionalism with accessibility.

Green Maple Leaf: Representing the Early Occupational Therapy Uniform

The vibrant green of the maple leaf is a tribute to the iconic Canadian occupational therapy uniform worn during the profession’s early days. As occupational therapy emerged as a new vocation during World War I, architect Captain Stanley Fryer designed a striking dark green uniform for the “ward aides” who supported wounded soldiers in resuming daily activities as they recovered from mental and physical injuries. Unlike the conservative medical uniforms of the era, Fryer’s design, with its military-style cut, was professional yet attractive.

The ward aides’ groundbreaking work and distinctive uniform garnered media attention throughout the early 1920s, with headlines celebrating “the Girls in Green” in publications such as *The Globe* and *Maclean’s* magazine. Green became occupational therapy’s defining colour in hospital settings for many years, distinguishing OTs from physiotherapists who traditionally wore navy blue.

While OTs and OTAs today typically wear scrubs or professional attire rather than formal uniforms, green remains a symbolic connection to the profession’s roots. As we mark CAOT’s centennial, the use of this energetic and fresh colour honours our heritage – from those trailblazing ward aides helping veterans rebuild their lives, through a century of professional evolution, and forward into our next hundred years.



WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

Serving the profession since 1926, CAOT is the national professional organization that gives voice to the more than 20,000 OTs, OTAs, and students who study or work in Canada.

We're a member-based organization that invites input from all corners of the profession to guide our direction and set our priorities. We are pleased to celebrate the support of more than 11,000 members, as together we make our profession stronger.

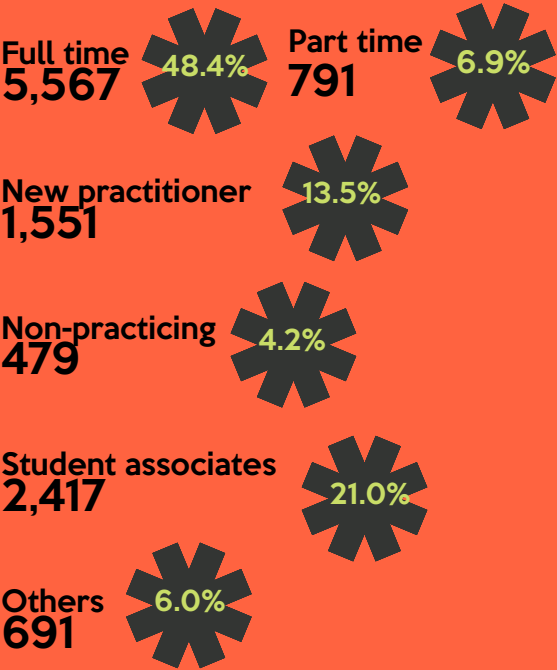
CAOT members improve the health and well-being of Canadians by working in partnership with people and communities to help them participate more fully in activities that are important to their everyday lives. With our staff members working virtually across Canada and regional chapters in British Columbia, Québec, and Northern Canada, CAOT works on behalf of its members by:

-  Fostering a sense of community among members that encourages pride in and strengthens the profession through networking, innovation, knowledge exchange, and volunteer engagement;
-  Advocating for change with government and health care decision-makers for better recognition of occupational therapy and the contributions OTs and OTAs bring to the health of Canadians;
-  Advancing excellence through professional development and practice resources that are current, relevant, and affordable; and
-  Stewarding and safeguarding the profession through the accreditation of Canadian occupational therapy education programs and administration of the National Occupational Therapy Certification Exam (NOTCE).

TOTAL MEMBERS
2024-2025:
11,496

YOUR MEMBERSHIP SAVINGS
Flexible Payment Options: 19.3% of
renewing members opted into the
monthly payment option.

MEMBERSHIP NUMBERS



STRENGTHENING OTA INCLUSION AND RECOGNITION

We're thrilled to strengthen our commitment to OTAs through initiatives that make membership accessible and celebrate OTA excellence nationally.

The annual OTA membership fee is now **\$57 – down from \$155, a reduction of more than 60% for two years**. This means every OTA can access CAOT's full range of resources, professional development, and advocacy without financial barriers standing in the way. OTAs are essential partners in delivering occupational therapy services, and this decision ensures the national association truly serves the entire profession.

We've also created something special: The OTA of Distinction Award. Beginning in 2026, this prestigious award will be presented annually at the CAOT Award Ceremony, honouring OTAs who demonstrate exceptional contributions to practice, innovation, leadership, or advocacy. Your excellence deserves national celebration, and now it has it.

By the numbers:

3,299 PARTICIPANTS

Investing in Your Personal Growth: CAOT members saved an average of \$450 on professional development this year compared to non-member rates.

- * Acceptance and Commitment Therapy with presenter Gord Hirano
- * BEST Strategies for Children and Youth with presenter Moira Peña
- * Coaching for Leadership Excellence and Self-Regulation with presenter Hélène Thériault
- * Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Level 1 with presenter Gord Hirano
- * Dialectical Behaviour Therapy with presenter Lisa Diamond-Burchuk
- * Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Strategies with presenter Zara Dureno

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION ADVOCACY

We're honoured to work alongside Indigenous leadership in advancing Truth and Reconciliation through advocacy that addresses systemic barriers to care. In 2024-2025, CAOT supported members serving Indigenous communities while partnering with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis leaders to advocate for meaningful change. Our role in this work is to support Indigenous-led advocacy and align our efforts with priorities articulated by Indigenous leadership.

Jordan's Principle Advocacy Response

When the federal government announced significant administrative changes to Jordan's Principle in February 2025, we worked closely with Indigenous partners to develop a coordinated response that centred Indigenous voices and priorities. This included:

- ✱ Gathering stories from OT members about how changes are affecting practice and client access to services
- ✱ Analyzing member experiences to support evidence-based advocacy led by Indigenous partners
- ✱ Collaborating with the Canadian Physiotherapy Association and Speech-Language & Audiology Canada to unify allied health support
- ✱ Preparing advocacy materials for engagement with the new federal government
- ✱ Participating in multiple strategic meetings throughout the year with Indigenous leadership organizations to learn from their guidance and align our advocacy with their priorities

This collaborative approach ensures our advocacy supports—rather than replaces—Indigenous voices leading the fight for reforms that serve First Nations children and families who depend on timely access to services under Jordan's Principle.

AFN Collaboration

We're proud to support the Assembly of First Nations' (AFN) Resolution #74-2024, "Expanding Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Coverage to Include Allied Health Services." This Indigenous-led resolution mandates the AFN to advocate for program expansion to include allied health services, including occupational therapy.

Through meetings with AFN leadership, the Senior Policy Analyst for Jordan's Principle, and the Acting Director of Social Development, we've built a partnership that positions CAOT's advocacy within a broader Indigenous-led movement for improved healthcare access. Working under AFN's leadership, we ensure occupational therapy perspectives support and align with priorities articulated by First Nations leadership.

Chiefs of Ontario Partnership



of Ontario leadership, including Tobi Mitchell, Director of Health, and Finn Simard, Director of Social, for Jordan's Principle.

Together, we examined how NIHB and Jordan's Principle administrative practices are negatively impacting both OTs and the communities they serve. Members' experiences with administrative burdens, funding implications, and service disruptions aligned with concerns the Chiefs of Ontario are hearing from their communities. This shared understanding strengthened our commitment to continued collaboration and systemic advocacy for long-term reform, with CAOT following the leadership and direction of Chiefs of Ontario.

At the 2025 First Nations Community Wellness Conference in Toronto, our Advocacy team had the privilege of meeting with Chiefs

Independent First Nations Partnership

Our meeting with Sasha Maracle, Community Programs Officer with the Independent First Nations, deepened our understanding of how the February 2025 federal government changes to Jordan's Principle are affecting communities and service providers.

We shared member experiences of navigating these changes—delayed payments, significant administrative burdens, and serious service disruptions that run contrary to Jordan's Principle as a child-first, needs-based approach. Together, we affirmed the importance of continued collaboration to advocate for improvements that ensure equitable access to occupational therapy services for First Nations communities, with CAOT supporting advocacy priorities identified by Independent First Nations leadership.

- ✱ The creation of a member feedback survey to collect personal stories from OTs about how the changes are affecting occupational therapy practice and client access to services
- ✱ Analysis of member experiences to identify patterns and systemic issues for evidence-based advocacy
- ✱ Discussions with the Canadian Physiotherapy Association and Speech-Language & Audiology Canada about collaboration and unifying our efforts
- ✱ Preparation of advocacy materials for engagement with the new federal government
- ✱ Multiple strategic meetings throughout the year with Indigenous leadership organizations to address challenges and align advocacy approaches

This work positioned CAOT to advocate for reforms that support both OTs and the First Nations children and families who depend on timely access to services under Jordan's Principle, while ensuring our advocacy supports rather than replaces Indigenous voices leading this work.

INFLUENCING CHANGE ADVOCACY

Federal Government Advocacy

CAOT’s advocacy power comes from you—our members who share stories, contact MPs, and demonstrate occupational therapy’s impact. Every letter sent, every story shared, and every conversation with a policymaker strengthens our collective voice.

Our federal advocacy work focused on expanding professional scope, reducing financial barriers for practitioners, and improving client access to occupational therapy services through policy reform.

Student Loan Forgiveness Program

Together, we’ve kept occupational therapy in the conversation about Canada’s Student Loan Forgiveness program, which provides up to \$60,000 in loan forgiveness for eligible professionals practising in rural and remote communities. Thanks to member advocacy—particularly Aya Anholt’s persistent efforts in BC—we achieved significant momentum:

- ✱ MP Taylor Bachrach raised the issue in Question Period, bringing parliamentary attention to OT exclusion
- ✱ We obtained a Parliamentary Secretary response to official questions about OT eligibility
- ✱ Members mobilized using template letters and clear action steps when OTs were excluded from the March 2025 consultation
- ✱ We presented evidence-based submissions to the Federal Government about the value OTs bring to rural and remote communities

We’re especially proud of our student-focused campaign, developed in collaboration with two University of Ottawa occupational therapy students. The multi-platform initiative included letter templates for members to contact MPs, social media video content, and first-person testimonials that reached beyond our usual audience:

- ✱ The English Instagram video garnered more than 40,000 views with 772 interactions
- ✱ The French video received over 8,700 views with 185 interactions
- ✱ A member-generated Instagram post reached over 23,000 views, with 76% of viewers being non-followers—demonstrating how member voices expand our reach

We submitted responses to the Government of Canada’s public consultation both individually and collectively through the Extended Healthcare Professionals Coalition (EHPC), ensuring occupational therapy perspectives were represented in official consultation channels. While the fight continues, together we’re ensuring OTs remain in the conversation and building the case for inclusion in future program expansions.



Extended Health Insurance Coverage

The “Ask for OT” petition demonstrated the power of collective action. Launched in October 2024 to advocate for occupational therapy inclusion in extended health insurance plans, the petition garnered more than 7,500 signatures and received over 102,000 views within two months. We leveraged this public support in advocacy efforts with the federal government, insurance companies, insurance brokers, employers, and unions to expand coverage for occupational therapy services.

“A healthy society starts with healthy people who can participate in all their valued roles and occupations. Increasing access to occupational therapy services is one low-cost solution toward a healthy society.” – “Ask for OT” petition supporter

Pre-Budget Submissions

CAOT submitted recommendations to the Standing Committee on Finance for Budget 2025, focusing on three priorities that emerged from member feedback:

- ✱ Expansion of Canada Student Loan Forgiveness to include occupational therapists
- ✱ Amendment of the Income Tax Act to permit occupational therapists to complete mental function sections of Disability Tax Credit applications
- ✱ Increase to the Home Accessibility Tax Credit to improve client access to recommended home modifications

Disability Tax Credit Advocacy

We continued advocating for recognition of OTs as qualified practitioners to complete the mental function sections of Disability Tax Credit (DTC) applications. In September 2025, we collected member feedback on experiences with the DTC process and impacts since the launch of the Canada Disability Benefit. This member input informed evidence-based submissions to government officials supporting scope expansion that recognises occupational therapists’ expertise in cognitive and functional assessment.

Housing Accessibility Policy

In August 2025, CAOT responded to the federal government’s Build Canada Homes initiative consultation, advocating for the integration of accessibility standards into affordable housing development. We encouraged members to submit feedback, emphasising that accessible housing must be affordable and designed with universal principles from the outset, not retrofitted later. Your submissions amplified the message that OTs understand housing accessibility better than anyone.

NIHB Major Eligibility Expansion

CAOT’s sustained advocacy with Indigenous Services Canada regarding the NIHB program helped achieve a significant victory for the profession in 2025. OTs are now eligible as NIHB providers for custom-fitted and custom-made upper limb orthoses without requiring additional certification.

The removal of this credentialing barrier represents a major expansion of practice opportunities for OTs serving First Nations and Inuit communities. Previously, OTs were required to obtain additional certification from the Hand Therapy Certification Commission to provide these services under NIHB—a barrier that limited the number of qualified providers and delayed access to care for clients.

Throughout the year, CAOT maintained ongoing dialogue with NIHB officials on equipment coverage, mental health services, and administrative process improvements. We also hosted an NIHB Program webinar on Medical Supplies & Equipment attended by 130 members, providing detailed information on client eligibility, benefit coverage processes, and required documentation.

Interprofessional Conference Engagement

CAOT maintained a strategic presence at national healthcare conferences throughout the year, showcasing occupational therapy’s contributions to fall prevention, ageing in place, team-based primary care, and health workforce solutions. At the Canadian Fall Prevention Conference, we presented a digital poster on home modifications while member Marnie Courage, Founder and CEO of Incluzia, participated in panel discussions. At the Geriatric Medicine Refresher Day, CAOT’s Advocacy and Policy Manager addressed geriatric specialists on ageing in place interventions. We also advocated at the Canadian Medical Association Health Summit for occupational therapy integration in team-based primary care and participated at the Canadian Health Workforce Conference, positioning occupational therapy as a workforce solution.

PROMOTING
OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY IN
CANADA
ADVOCACY

Strategic Coalition Partnerships

Amplifying occupational therapy’s voice in policy conversations is a team effort. Throughout 2024-2025, we brought your expertise and evidence to key partners—government officials, healthcare leaders, and policy influencers—ensuring occupational therapy perspectives shaped decisions affecting the profession and the Canadians you serve.

We strengthened occupational therapy’s influence by participating actively in three national healthcare coalitions, ensuring your perspectives were heard in critical policy discussions.

Through the Extended Healthcare Professionals Coalition (EHPC), we joined forces with allied health partners to present a united voice on Student Loan Forgiveness, NIHB improvements, and health workforce issues—demonstrating that when allied health professionals stand together, we’re harder to ignore.

Organizations for Health Action (HEAL) provided us with quarterly access to cabinet ministers, MPs, and shadow cabinet members, where we championed occupational therapy’s contributions to mental health, team-based care, and healthcare workforce solutions. These direct conversations with decision-makers ensure occupational therapy isn’t just in the room — it’s part of the conversation.

Our work with the Palliative Care Coalition of Canada (PCCC) included five strategic meetings and events with MPs and Parliamentary Secretaries, while contributing to the Blueprint for Action 2025-2030 – a document that will guide national palliative care policy development over the next five years. Your expertise in supporting meaningful participation at the end of life is now woven into Canada’s palliative care policy framework.

Opioid Crisis Response

We’re proud to have positioned occupational therapy as an essential component of Canada’s multidisciplinary response to the opioid crisis through strategic advocacy that elevates what you already know: functional support saves lives.

We met with the office of the Honourable Ya’ara Saks, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, to advocate for occupational therapy’s role in addressing the opioid crisis and supporting youth mental health. The meeting included discussion of the 2024 Canadian Opioid Prescribing Guideline Recommendation 11, which formally recognizes occupational therapy as part of multidisciplinary support for individuals affected by opioid use. This represents official acknowledgment of the profession’s contribution to evidence-based opioid crisis interventions—validation of the life-changing work you do every day.

Published Commentary

We amplified occupational therapy’s voice in national media with an op-ed titled “[Team-based care and early pain management can help remedy the opioid crisis](#),” authored by then-CEO Hélène Sabourin. The commentary articulated

evidence for occupational therapy’s role in early intervention and team-based approaches to opioid use disorder, bringing your practice wisdom to a broader public audience.

Growing Occupational Therapy Support for Veterans

Veterans Affairs Canada’s (VAC) multi-year expansion of occupational therapy services, which began over five years ago, continued to strengthen occupational therapy service access for Veterans across Canada. The expansion implements best practices for consistent, equitable service delivery and emphasises occupational therapy’s critical role in Veteran rehabilitation and community reintegration.

VAC Provider Recruitment

VAC issued recruitment calls for occupational therapists to register with Medavie Blue Cross as third-party fee-for-service providers supporting Veterans with complex physical and mental health needs. We promoted these opportunities to CAOT members in April and June 2025, connecting practitioners with meaningful work serving those who served Canada.

OTC Day Addresses AI and the Future of Occupational Therapy

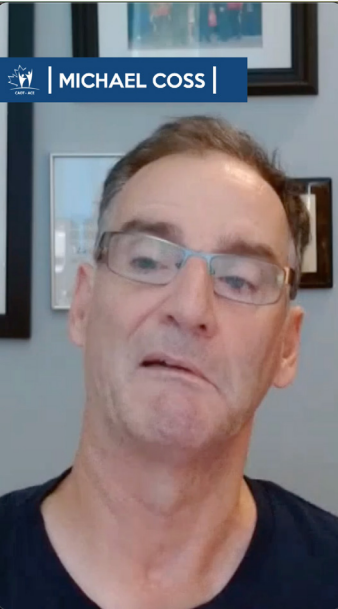
The 2025 Occupational Therapy Canada (OTC) Reflection Day brought together representatives from CAOT, COTF, ACOTRO, ACOTUP, and ACOTPA, along with occupational therapy students, to explore artificial intelligence’s (AI) transformative impact on the profession. Together, we examined AI applications already in use—from reducing documentation time to enabling AI-administered assessments—while addressing critical considerations around ethical stewardship, data privacy, algorithmic bias, and environmental impact.

The collaborative discussion emphasised the urgent need for professional readiness through AI literacy development, pre-licensure education integration, and strategic leadership at all levels. Key outcomes included calls for a national AI Task Force, development of national AI guidelines and competencies, and discipline-specific training initiatives. The session underscored that embracing AI responsibly is essential for future-proofing occupational therapy and ensuring the profession actively shapes its role in an evolving healthcare landscape rather than having others define it for us.

INCREASING PUBLIC AWARENESS COMMUNICATIONS + MARKETING

Demonstrating OT Impact: TBI Recovery Story

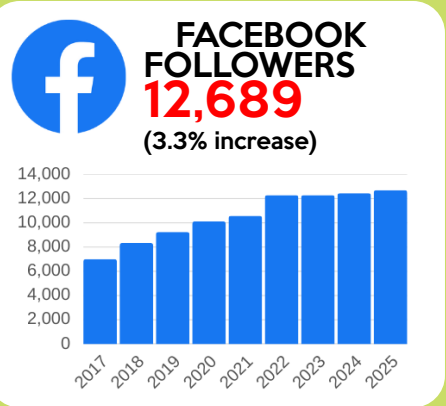
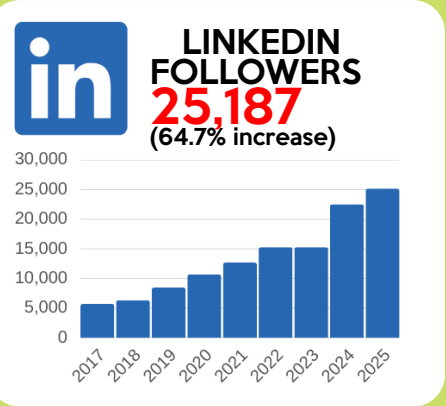
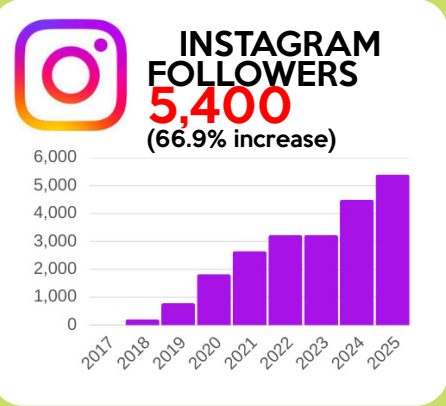
This year, we had the privilege of sharing Michael Coss’s incredible recovery story. His video shows the profound impact of occupational therapy on traumatic brain injury rehabilitation—the kind of transformation we witness every day but that the public rarely gets to see. It’s a powerful tool we can all use when explaining what occupational therapy does and why it matters. The video showcased occupational therapy’s impact on concussion rehabilitation and functional recovery, providing compelling narrative evidence for public education and advocacy purposes.



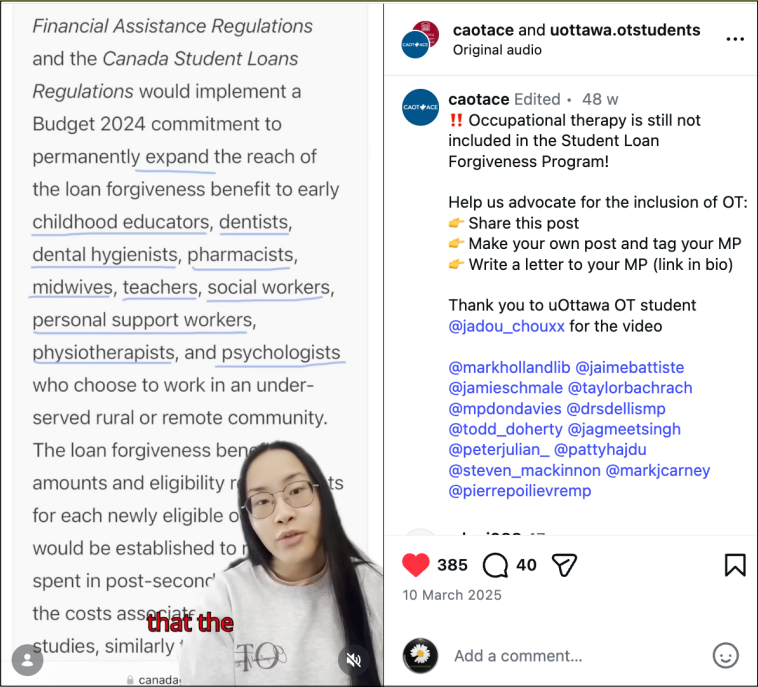
“OT helped me regain the confidence to be able to enjoy those simple things in life again and improve my quality of life. I’m able to enjoy life to the fullest, to go visit my kids, to see them in their sports and school activities. I’m able to enjoy life and I want to make a difference in this world.” – Michael Coss, traumatic brain injury survivor

SOCIAL MEDIA STATS

Social Media Numbers as of Sept 30, 2025:



TOP SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS 2025



SUPPORT FOR YOUR PRACTICE PRACTICE RESOURCES

In addition to our established library of publications, references, and tools available at www.caot.ca to support you and your practice, we launched several new resources in 2024-2025.

Your Membership Savings

Free Resources Worth Thousands:
All 64 bilingual practice documents developed with 200+ occupational therapy leaders are freely available to CAOT members: a \$2,500+ value if purchased individually.

Internationally Educated Occupational Therapist Navigation Portal

We're proud to announce that CAOT has secured funding from Health Canada for an 18-month national project (August 2025–April 2027) supporting internationally educated occupational therapists (IEOTs) in navigating licensure and workforce integration. The initiative addresses critical information gaps by developing a bilingual online portal offering step-by-step licensure guidance, interactive learning modules on Canadian practice expectations, cultural safety resources, self-assessment tools, and an AI-powered chatbot for real-time support.

The portal, which will be developed in partnership with ACOTRO and informed by Indigenous advisory committees and Quebec-specific consultation, will provide personalized pathways from pre-arrival planning through workforce integration. The project responds to Canada's immediate need for over 2,000 additional OTs while ensuring IEOTs are equipped to provide culturally safe care aligned with Canadian standards.

OT Practice Document Collection Released: 64 Bilingual Documents



OT PRACTICE DOCUMENTS

We're excited to share a comprehensive collection of practice documents that outline occupational therapy's role across a wide variety of practice areas in **English** and **French**. Developed in collaboration with more than 200 occupational therapy leaders, these documents provide evidence-based descriptions of occupational therapy scope and contributions in diverse settings. Each two-page document provides an outline of the occupational therapy role. There are 64 areas of practice available, including mental health, pediatrics, primary care, Indigenous health, cancer care, leadership, hand care, ergonomics, and neurodiversity. These resources support OTs and OTAs in sharing information about their roles and responsibilities with clients, employers, healthcare professionals, and other interested parties. Whether you're educating a new employer, advocating with government officials, supporting a client in understanding your role, or making the case to an insurance provider, you now have professionally developed resources at your fingertips.

"What Do OTs Do" Public Education Resource



We created "**What OTs Do**," a concise practice resource designed to increase the profession's visibility and understanding for multiple audiences, including clients, healthcare providers, policymakers, employers, and the general public. The resource provides a clear description of occupational therapy practice, showcasing the profession's diverse, equity-focused, and person-centred approach to promoting health, inclusion, and participation in everyday life with individuals, families, and communities. The resource serves multiple strategic purposes: advocacy with policymakers and funders, public awareness campaigns, promotion across practice areas, interprofessional education, and client communication. It's designed to make your job of explaining occupational therapy easier and more effective.

Connecting Practitioners Across Canada

CAOT's **Practice Networks** continued to provide vital spaces for OTs and OTAs to connect, share knowledge, and advance specialized practice areas. Eighteen practice networks and seven communities of practice brought together practitioners with shared interests and expertise throughout 2024-2025, facilitating knowledge exchange, resource development, and peer support.

We launched two new practice networks during the year, expanding CAOT's network offerings to address emerging practice areas and member needs. The Canadian Telerehab

Community of Practice launched in November 2024, providing a platform for practitioners delivering services through digital and remote modalities to share strategies, navigate regulatory considerations, and advance telehealth practice competencies.

The OT and Eating Disorder Practice Network launched in April 2025 with a virtual Conversations that Matter Forum titled “The OT Role in Eating Disorder Treatment: A Cross-Country Check-Up,” bringing together practitioners to share knowledge and best practices in supporting individuals affected by eating disorders across the lifespan. Co-chaired by Ashley Gardner and Julia Pearce, the network addresses a growing area of occupational therapy practice.

Our established practice networks remained vibrant hubs for collaboration throughout the year, including Mental Health and Substance Use, Palliative and End-of-Life Care, Addressing Suicide in OT Practice, Global Health, Home Modifications & Inclusive Design, ADHD, Sexuality and Gender in OT Practice, and Innovative Team-Based Care.

CarFit Expands its Reach Across Canada with Community Partnerships and Training



Gopal Uppalapati, Brenda Vrkljan, and Milenna Raposo from McMaster University join Brenda Grant, CarFit’s Program Coordinator (second from right), at the 2025 EcoCAR EV Challenge.

CarFit is a free educational program for drivers offered by CAOT designed to help drivers “fit” in their cars. Over the last year, CarFit expanded significantly across Canada, holding 15 in-person events in five provinces that reached 401 drivers, including eight Self-Assessment presentations in three provinces. CarFit also conducted 13 training events in eight provinces, training close to 200 occupational therapy students at three universities. The program received media attention for its collaboration with engineering students from McMaster University’s EcoCAR team, who included a CarFit event as part of their EcoCAR EV Challenge competition.

To strengthen program sustainability and broaden its reach, CAOT worked to integrate CarFit into everyday occupational therapy practice by promoting the 1:1 delivery method in private practice, primary care, and home care/community settings across the country while developing new community partnerships with seniors’ groups, university occupational therapy programs, trauma centres, and a car dealership.

Canadian OT Grad Guide: Supporting Student-to-Practice Transition



We launched the **Canadian OT Grad Guide**, a comprehensive resource designed to support occupational therapy students in transitioning from academic programs to professional practice. The Grad Guide was promoted to student associates through targeted communications emphasizing CAOT’s commitment to serving as a “career partner for life” from student membership through professional practice.

It provides detailed pathways for three distinct scenarios: beginning work as an OT before passing the National Occupational Therapy Certification Examination (NOTCE), passing the exam before starting practice, and working as an OT in Québec.

The Grad Guide includes visual pathway maps, organizational checklists, and practical resources addressing exam preparation, professional liability protection, job search strategies, and career development. The content emphasizes the importance of early preparation before graduation and connects students to CAOT’s broader suite of resources, including the **Find an OT Mentor Program** and **Practice Networks**, which are free for students. It reflects our commitment to being your career partner from student membership through every stage of practice.

Introduction of Find an OT Leader

We’re proud to introduce the **Find an OT Leader** program, which recognizes and connects researchers, healthcare providers, policymakers, and community organizations with OTs who have advanced expertise in specific practice areas. Members can identify as OT Leaders based on **criteria** recommended by the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) for advanced practice experience. The program complements our **Find an OT service**, while connecting the occupational therapy community and promoting fair compensation for specialized occupational therapy expertise.

KEEPING YOU INFORMED

PRACTICE RESOURCES

CAOT's Podcast Celebrates its Fourth Year

We're celebrating four years of *Conversations that Matter: The Podcast*! Over the past year, we've shared 23 new episodes featuring everyday working OTs, OTAs, and students from across Canada, significantly expanding our French content to better serve the entire profession. The monthly podcast is available on Spotify and CAOT's website. The episodes focused on a wide range of topics, including leadership, business innovation and entrepreneurship, music as an occupation, evidence-based practice, substance use, palliative care, accessibility, sexuality and health, and so much more.

By the numbers:

TOTAL OF 23 EPISODES PUBLISHED
(15 English, 8 in French)

1.2K IN LISTENING HOURS

602% INCREASE IN
NEW LISTENERS

40% INCREASE IN FOLLOWERS

LISTENERS FROM 39 COUNTRIES



Top episode of the year: Episode 52 – “*Transitioning from Study to Practice: Support for New Occupational Therapy Practitioners*” with Christine Dettwiler and Dustin Gelowitz

“It’s so important to read through the manuals for the exam because you’ll learn about the registration process, how to do site visits for in-person exams, or the technical and environmental requirements if you’re going to be writing from home. The more that you read about before you start, the more confident and the more comfortable you’ll be when you’re going through the process, and it will help reduce your stress.”

– Christine Dettwiler

CJOT: Enhanced Efficiency and Increased Impact

The *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy (CJOT)*, CAOT’s official peer-reviewed bilingual journal, publishes four times a year to foster advancement and growth in occupational therapy scholarship. Brenda Vrkljan, *CJOT*’s Editor-in-Chief, reported significant improvements in manuscript processing times during 2024-2025, with the timeframe for first decision timelines decreasing by 65.6%. The journal’s Impact Factor has increased, with an improvement in its rehabilitation ranking from 78/169 to 71/173. Manuscript submissions reached 158 by September 2025, maintaining strong momentum from 2024’s 54% increase.

OT Now: Open Access and Expanded Reach

Occupational Therapy Now (OT Now), CAOT’s practice magazine, became officially open access with the January 2025 issue. This change significantly expanded its reach beyond CAOT members, with its monthly readership growing by 113% over the past year. Anyone can now read about the innovative occupational therapy practices found in the publication with just one click. This means greater visibility for Canadian occupational therapy practice, research, and innovation, and easier knowledge-sharing with clients, colleagues, healthcare partners, and the public. Each article also has a Digital Object Identifier (DOI) to enable easy sharing of individual articles with others.



“The decision to shift to open access reflects CAOT’s commitment to raise public awareness, improve equity, and advance the profession.”
– Irving Gold, CAOT’s CEO

KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION RESEARCH INTO ACTION

Knowledge translation is an important part of our mandate to help strengthen the profession through the advancement of occupational therapy research. Each year, we collaborate with researchers, clinicians, and partners to share the latest developments to move knowledge into action and bring research into practice.

Your Membership Savings

Access to Leading Research: Members receive free access to the *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy (CJOT)* and other international journals, such as the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy (AJOT)*, the *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal (AOTJ)*, the *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, and more.

CAOT Launches Free Primary Care Learning Modules

We celebrated World Occupational Therapy Day 2024 by launching free, bilingual online learning modules designed to enhance the capacity of occupational therapy learners and practitioners to practice in collaborative primary care teams.

- * [“Occupational Therapy in Primary Care”](#)
- * [“Foundations of Team-Based Primary Care”](#)

Designed by a primary care research team led by Catherine Donnelly and Nicole Bobbette and funded by the Foundation for Advancing Family Medicine, these resources support interprofessional education on occupational therapy’s contributions to team-based primary care models, which is a priority area in federal healthcare reform discussions. An Advisory Committee was established to guide the project, and a consensus-building exercise was conducted with interprofessional partners, including dietitians, physiotherapists, speech-language pathologists, social workers, and other healthcare professionals. This collaborative approach ensures the resources reflect contemporary team-based primary care practice and position occupational therapy effectively within interprofessional contexts. With primary care integration high on the federal healthcare reform agenda, these resources give us evidence-based language to demonstrate occupational therapy’s essential contributions to collaborative care models.

“For learners and educators, we see these modules as a wonderful opportunity to learn about primary care within the curriculum, in a course, or maybe in preparation for fieldwork. For OTs not working in this setting, these modules provide you with an introduction to the scope of services we provide in primary care – the assessments, the interventions, and the diverse populations we work with.”
 – Catherine Donnelly

Free Accessibility and Professional Wellness Webinars

Responding to member needs, we developed and delivered four free webinars, including one in English and three in French, addressing visual accessibility in practice, the use of artificial intelligence (AI), and burnout prevention for OTs.

- * [Create a visually accessible practice for clients with vision loss](#) (English) – Strategies for adapting clinical environments to serve clients with visual impairments
- * [Adapter sa pratique pour qu’elle soit visuellement accessible pour la clientèle ayant une perte de vision](#) (French) – Visual accessibility adaptation
- * [Premiers pas avec l’intelligence artificielle: comment en faire une utilisation avisée et responsable?](#) (French) – Responsible AI use in practice
- * [Entre pression et passion: Prévenir l’épuisement professionnel en ergothérapie et cultiver sa vitalité](#) (French) – Preventing burnout and cultivating professional vitality

Launch of Open-Access Economic Evidence Clearinghouse Resource

We’re excited to launch the open-access Economic Evidence Clearinghouse (EEC) in both [English](#) and [French](#) — a powerful new tool for making the economic case for occupational therapy. This open-access, bilingual platform gives practitioners, researchers, students, and advocates what they need to demonstrate our profession’s value: a searchable database of 25 years of economic evidence research across all practice domains, complemented by introductory webinars on economic competencies and key publications, including [“Economic evidence in occupational therapy: A rapid review,”](#) which was published in CJOT.

The EEC was built with you in mind: it ensures rigorous economic analysis is accessible, helps you engage confidently with economic evidence, and strengthens our collective ability to communicate value to policymakers and healthcare stakeholders. The platform will continue growing with additional knowledge translation tools that support your advocacy efforts.

BUILDING COMMUNITY CELEBRATING OTS + OTAS

OT Month Celebrations

OTs, students, OTAs, clients, and other health professionals had a lot to celebrate during OT Month in October 2024 and on World OT Day on October 27. The annual 2024 [gOT Spirit Challenge](#) to create a video that shows the world what occupational therapy is all about was won by the [University of Manitoba](#). Other OT Month activities included:

- ✱ CAOT-Qc’s Regional Director, Soëla Bandaly, and Nathalie Veillette, CAOT’s Québec Board Director, held an online forum to discuss the realities of day-to-day practice and occupational therapy careers in Québec.
- ✱ CAOT-SK held a virtual forum about occupational therapy leadership in Saskatchewan with a panel of OTs from various backgrounds and levels of experience to discuss what it means to be a leader.
- ✱ We celebrated OTA Appreciation Day on October 12, 2024, to raise awareness about what OTAs do and the value they add.

On World OT Day 2024, we lit up Canada—literally! For our second annual campaign, 58 iconic landmarks, buildings, and bridges across the country glowed blue to celebrate occupational therapy and the meaningful differences OTs and OTAs make in communities from coast to coast to coast. It was a powerful visual reminder that our profession is everywhere, making impact every day.

“Illuminating iconic buildings, bridges, and signs in blue brilliantly symbolizes the tremendous impact made by the 20,000+ OTs and OTAs each day as they improve the health and wellbeing of those living in Turtle Island on the land also known as Canada and help them participate more fully in activities that are important to their everyday lives.” – Lisa Diamond Burchuk, CAOT’s Board Chair

Member Appreciation Day 2025

We love Member Appreciation Day because it gives us a chance to celebrate the incredible people in our community. On February 26, 2025, we asked, “Who has inspired you in the Canadian occupational therapy community, past or present, and why?” Members responded with thoughtful, touching tributes across all our social media platforms—honouring the mentors, leaders, colleagues, and innovators who’ve shaped their journeys. With generous support from partners, we provided prizes while creating space to recognize the people who make this profession what it is.

Lest We Forget: Honouring Canada’s Veterans

Rebecca Van Schyndel, an Ottawa-based OT, represented our profession at the National Remembrance Day ceremony, laying a wreath at the National War Memorial on behalf of OTs across Canada. This act of remembrance honours the profound connection between occupational therapy and those who serve – a bond that began when our profession was founded to support wounded soldiers and continues today as we work alongside veterans and active Canadian Armed Forces members. We are forever grateful for their sacrifice.



LARGEST OT GATHERING

CAOT CONFERENCE

Each year, we organize special events to help bring together the occupational therapy community across Canada to celebrate our profession and promote learning and sharing of the latest advancements in occupational therapy information.

CAOT Conference 2025

Thanks to everyone who joined us for CAOT Conference 2025, which was held from May 7-9, 2025, in amiskwacîwâskahikan/Edmonton, Alberta. Our 89th conference featured presentations from occupational therapy practitioners who shared their knowledge and strategies for promoting occupational participation, advocating for change, introducing innovations, influencing health care delivery, and more.

Here are some of the conference highlights:



Keynote speakers Anthony Johnson and Dr. James Makokis, the Amazing Two-Spirit Couple from Season 7 of Amazing Race Canada, gave presentations about challenging bias and fostering inclusion that drew from their work championing equity for Indigenous and LGBTQ2S+ communities.



Alik Thomas, the 2024 recipient of the CAOT Muriel Driver Memorial Lectureship Award, delivered a lecture titled “The Knowledge We Hold: Exploring occupational therapy’s epistemic identity and the balance between evidence and practice.”



Brenda Vrkljan spoke at the COTF Lunch with a Scholar with a talk titled, “Driving tomorrow: Envisioning the future of occupational therapy.”



An Indigenous Blanket Exercise, led by CAOT External Board Director Debra Beach Ducharme and Margaret Hart, was offered as a pre-conference workshop.



Six talented artists from Alberta’s I.A.M. Collective, the province’s largest all-Indigenous arts collective representing 170+ artists and Traditional Knowledge Holders, showcased and sold authentic beadwork, wellness products, and handcrafted Indigenous creations.

By the numbers:

640 IN-PERSON PARTICIPANTS

202 IN-PERSON PRESENTATIONS

53 EXHIBITORS

6 SPONSORS

YOUR MEMBERSHIP SAVINGS

Premium Conference Benefits: CAOT members saved \$200 on Conference 2025 registration and received exclusive early-bird access to secure their spots before the general public.



Thank you to our generous and supportive Conference 2025 sponsors, many who are also exhibitors, corporate associates, and providers of many valued member benefits.



CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE

2025 AWARDS

We're proud to shine a spotlight on excellence in our profession. Each year, CAOT recognizes the remarkable accomplishments and contributions of occupational therapy researchers, practitioners, trainees, educators, and advocates from across Canada. In 2025, we celebrated award winners at the 2024-2025 CAOT Annual General Meeting and gathered as a community to honour them at CAOT Conference in amiskwacîwâskahikan/Edmonton, Alberta.

MURIEL DRIVER LECTURE: Catherine Donnelly



CAOT is proud to announce that Catherine Donnelly is the recipient of the **2025 Muriel Driver Memorial Lectureship Award**, the organization's most prestigious honour that recognizes the outstanding contributions made by an individual in the fields of research, teaching, and the practice of occupational therapy. She has made outstanding contributions to the profession through research, education, and occupational therapy practice that have highlighted and strengthened the profession, both directly and through her dedication to CAOT and the Ontario Society of Occupational Therapists.

Catherine leads with vision, inspiring transformation through her personal example and innovative approach. She spearheaded the development, evaluation, and expansion of the innovative Oasis model, which supports community aging in place. As is tradition, Catherine will deliver a lecture on a topic of her choice at CAOT Conference 2026, which is taking place in Tiohtià:ke|Mooniyang/ Montréal, Québec, from May 13-15.

“As a clinician, researcher, and educator at Queen’s University, Catherine has consistently demonstrated vision and impact while preparing future generations of OTs and exemplifying leadership, commitment, and passion.”
– Lisa Diamond-Burchuk, CAOT’s Board Chair

- AWARD FOR LEADERSHIP IN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY:** Jennifer (Jenni) Diamond
- AWARD FOR MERIT:** Carol MacDonald; Donna MacLeod; and Dr. Maryna Mammoliti
- INNOVATIVE PRACTICE AWARD:** Stéphanie Gamache; and Deanna Starr
- FELLOWSHIP AWARD:** Bernadette Nedelec

- CAOT-BC OUTSTANDING OT OF THE YEAR:** Jeff Boniface
- CAOT-NORTH OUTSTANDING OT OF THE YEAR:** Cathy McNeil
- CAOT-QC OUTSTANDING OT OF THE YEAR:** Annie Rochette
- CAOT LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP:** Heather Cutcliffe; and Margaret Tompson
- GOLDEN QUILL AWARD:** Mary Ann McColl, Celine Boyer Denis, Kate-Lin Douglas, Justin Gilmour, Nicole Haveman, Meaghan Petersen, Brittany Presswell, and Mary Law for their article ‘A Clinically Significant Difference on the COPM: A Review’

- CAOT STUDENT AWARDS** are awarded to a graduating student in each Canadian university occupational therapy education program who has obtained the highest academic standing in coursework throughout the entire program.
- University of British Columbia - Amanda Kuo
- University of Alberta - Jessalyn Angele McNeil
- University of Manitoba - Josée Rochon
- Western University - Meghan Foster
- McMaster University - Ayla Lyons
- University of Toronto - Kajaani Shanmugarajah
- Queen’s University - Abigail MacDonald
- Université de Sherbrooke - Jérémie Goyette
- University of Ottawa - Sophia Savalli & Megan Assaly
- McGill University - Julia Maddalena
- Université de Montréal - Colombe Campeau-Isabelle
- Université Laval - Emmy Drolet
- Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières - Arianne Desrochers & Kathryn Bellemare
- Dalhousie University - Jessica Blades

CITATION AWARD is given by CAOT in conjunction with provincial and territorial occupational therapy associations to acknowledge the contribution to the health and well-being of Canadians of an agency, program, or individual who is not an occupational therapist.

Agency, program and/or individual Award Recipient	Provincial/Chapter Nominator
BC Association of Child Development and Intervention	CAOT & CAOT-BC
Shannon Ediger	CAOT & CAOT-BC
Kaitlin Laurisden, Boyle Street Community Services (BSCS)	CAOT & SAOT
Charles Olfert, AODBT architecture + interior design	CAOT & CAOT-SK
Community Engaged Learning	CAOT & MSOT
Dr. Alain Vadeboncoeur	CAOT & CAOT-Qc
Cindy Carlson & David Cormier	CAOT & NBAOT
The Social Development Health Services Team - Mary Bartlett, Michelle Ricker, Angela Mullins & Cari Brewer	CAOT & NBAOT
Courtney Cameron, East Region Coordinator for the Makers Making Change program provided through the Neil Squire Society	CAOT & PEIOTS
Schizophrenia Society NL	CAOT & NLAOT
Discovery Centre (Waterford Bridge Campus)	CAOT & NLAOT
Piruatigiit Resource Centre	CAOT & CAOT-North

FIELDWORK EDUCATOR AWARD OF EXCELLENCE acknowledges the contribution of fieldwork educators who demonstrate exceptional performance in student practice teaching and mentoring in the workplace, and who inspire students.

- Dalhousie University - Mike Rogez
- McMaster University - Patricia Medeiros & Maria Gera
- McGill University - Yuqing (Mary) Zhao
- Queen's University - Katelyn Bridge
- Université de Montréal - Élise Matthey-Jacques
- Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières - Dusica Djilas
- Université Laval - Maude Bergeron-Dennie
- University of Alberta - Shobha George
- University of British Columbia - Mary Lau
- University of Manitoba - Kara Kozar
- University of Ottawa - Sophia Lovrenovic
- University of Toronto - Meredith McClenaghan

COLLECTIVE VOICES

CAOT CHAPTERS

Regional Advocacy in Action

CAOT’s Chapters are the regional collective voice of occupational therapists in their respective regions. The Chapters are guided by CAOT’s Strategic Plan, mission, and vision, in their endeavour to strengthen and build excellence for the profession while ensuring that Chapter activities are reflective of the regional community and responsive to local needs and issues. Here is an overview of their advocacy and stakeholder engagement activities over the past year.

CAOT-BC



Leadership Transition

We were pleased to welcome Kathy Elissat to the Regional Director role in November 2024. A BC-based OT since 2000 in both public and private practice, Kathy comes to the role after more than seven years as an OT Clinical Advisor at WorkSafeBC’s Special Care Services Department’s Serious Injuries Mental Health Claims Units.

Big Win for ICBC Occupational Therapy Providers

In a major win for CAOT-BC advocacy efforts, the BC Government announced a significant rate increase for OTs to \$145/hour, bringing an increase of \$14/hour when the yearly ICBC Consumer Price Index rate was increased. This information was shared with leaders and managers of other major funding agencies in BC to support pay parity efforts already underway.

CAOT-BC collaborated with the [Private Practice Business Network](#) and [WSBC OT Services](#) leadership representatives to form the CAOT-BC/WSBC Liaison Committee. Objectives include facilitating regular, constructive two-way dialogue and collaboration between occupational therapy and WSBC partners to support improved service delivery. Other

goals involve advocacy for fee harmonization and pay parity with other BC Funders, such as ICBC’s recent fee increases, and providing objective data to demonstrate occupational therapy’s value within mental health services and other programs.

CAOT-North



Serving Canada’s Most Geographically Dispersed Membership

CAOT-North serves OTs and OTAs across Canada’s vast northern regions, connecting practitioners who often work in isolation while addressing the unique challenges and opportunities of northern, rural, and remote practice.

Northern and Remote Practice Focus at CAOT Conference 2025

The Regional Directors of CAOT-North, in collaboration with CAOT-BC and CAOT-SK, hosted programming at CAOT Conference 2025 addressing the unique realities and resilience of occupational therapists practicing in rural, remote, and northern communities. Together, they hosted a wine and cheese networking reception for members living and working in northern, rural, and remote areas, creating a dedicated space for peer connection and community-building among practitioners facing similar geographic and practice challenges.

Kathy Elissat, Regional Director for CAOT-BC and Yukon, and Christine Fleming, Regional Director for CAOT-SK and Northwest Territories, co-facilitated a powerful Conversations that Matter session titled “Northern Reflections: Realities and Resilience of Rural and Remote Occupational Therapy in Canada.” The well-attended session generated rich conversation exploring both the profound rewards and significant challenges of rural and remote practice.

Practitioners identified critical needs, including formal role boundaries and embedded mentorship structures for solo and new graduate practitioners, along with strategies for managing professional isolation while maintaining quality care. These insights will inform CAOT’s ongoing work to better support members practicing in northern, rural, and remote settings.

Proposed Changes to Health Care in Yukon

CAOT-North attended a virtual public consultation organized by the Yukon Government about the modernization of the Health Profession Act and the regulation of health care in the territory. This consultation process with health care providers and members of the public addressed potential changes that will affect occupational therapy professionals who are practicing in or wish to practice in the Yukon. One of their aims is to begin to regulate health care professionals under one amalgamated college, similar to what has taken place in BC over the past few years.

CAOT-Qc

National Advisor for Francophone Services Appointed

CAOT-Qc’s Regional Director, Soëla Bandaly, was appointed as CAOT’s National Advisor for Francophone Services, a new role designed to strengthen occupational therapy in French at the national level. Soëla, who continues to serve in her Chapter role as well, will develop appropriate resources for Francophone practitioners, collaborate with Francophone partners, and amplify the contributions of Francophone OTs across Canada. The position enables implementation of concrete initiatives addressing Francophone community needs while ensuring a strong and sustained presence for French-language occupational therapy practice, research, and advocacy within CAOT’s national programs and services.



CAOT-Qc Collaborates with the Ordre des ergothérapeutes du Québec

Irving Gold, CAOT’s CEO, CAOT-Qc, and CAOT staff attended the 13th Annual OEQ Colloque in Montréal (November 14-15, 2024), themed “Interdisciplinarity and partnership – Building connections to optimize results.” CAOT presented on inclusive language use and engaged with attendees at the CAOT booth regarding CAOT-Qc membership benefits and the importance of independent personal professional liability insurance coverage.

CAOT-Qc also met with the Ordre des ergothérapeutes du Québec (OEQ) in April to explore collaborative opportunities serving Québec’s occupational therapy community, discuss several shared priorities aimed at advancing the profession in the province, and strengthen collaboration between our two organizations.

Continuing Education Recognition

Under OEQ’s new [continuing education regulations](#), CAOT’s [Communities of Practice](#) (CoPs) are now recognized as eligible for the required continuing education hours for Québec OTs. There are currently three Québec-based CoPs: Communauté de pratique Ergothérapie en GMF, Communauté de pratique Ergothérapeutes intervenant auprès des populations autochtone, and Communauté de pratique COVID-longue et ergothérapie. This recognition increases accessibility to professional development while supporting Francophone practitioners in meeting regulatory requirements through CAOT’s existing Practice Networks.

Joint Press Release on the Physician’s Assistant Program



CAOT-Qc published a joint press release in response to the article “[Un programme de maîtrise pour les adjoints au médecin verra le jour](#)” published in La Presse on October 5. CAOT-Qc collaborated with L’Association québécoise de la physiothérapie (AQP), la Fédération des cliniques de physiothérapie du Québec (FCPQ), et l’Association québécoise des ergothérapeutes en pratique privée (AQEPP) to share their thoughts on the impact this new program could have on the occupational therapy and physiotherapy workforce in Québec. [Read the full press release](#) (available in French).

CAOT-SK

Supporting the University of Saskatchewan’s MOT Program Launch

CAOT-SK actively promoted the University of Saskatchewan’s new Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) program throughout its development and launch phases. The program, which will welcome its inaugural cohort in fall 2026, represents a significant milestone for occupational therapy education in Saskatchewan. CAOT-SK shared program updates with members as recruitment progressed, including

announcements for four full-time tenure-track faculty positions and the appointment of Dr. Kirsten Smith as the inaugural MOT Program Chair. Five additional faculty members joined the program in September 2025.

CAOT-SK also facilitated the connection between the university’s School of Rehabilitation Science and Saskatchewan’s occupational therapy clinical community through the promotion of two information sessions. The Chapter ensured members had access to program details, including prerequisite courses, admission criteria, and curriculum development updates as they became available on the official program website.



Mental Health Community Initiative

CAOT-SK demonstrated leadership in mental health advocacy by sponsoring the “emOTional Wellness Warriors” team for Saskatoon’s Step Up for Mental Health 5km event. Team members ran, walked, and rolled along the Meewasin Trail to raise funds for Saskatchewan mental health support programs, embodying occupational therapy’s commitment to mental wellness and community participation.

SAFEGUARDING THE PROFESSION QUALITY EDUCATION + ACCREDITATION

As part of our commitment to steward and safeguard the profession, CAOT oversees accreditation of Canadian occupational therapy education and administers the National Occupational Therapy Certification Examination (NOTCE), which assesses the written application of academic knowledge and professional behaviour of individuals entering the occupational therapy profession in Canada.

Enacting the New OT Competencies

Work proceeded to incorporate the 2021 Competencies for Occupational Therapists in Canada (COTC) into the NOTCE, including developing items aligned with the new examination blueprint, which will be implemented for the first time in the September 2026 sitting.

The updated examination blueprint guided item generation, building on previous work to reflect the profession’s focus on culturally responsive, equitable, and justice-oriented practice and CAOT’s commitment to Truth and Reconciliation. A key development in 2025 was the inclusion of two OTs from the Indigenous Occupational Therapy Collective of Canada

on the Certification Examination Committee (CEC). This group coordinates all activities related to the construction, administration, and validation of the NOTCE. Indigenous members contributed to the development of examination items for the new competency area, Domain C: Culture, Equity, and Justice, and also participated in policy and examination resource development.

The NOTCE online [resource manual](#), with updated sample case scenarios and questions, was published and distributed to the Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations (ACOTRO) and the Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy University Programs (ACOTUP). Additionally, the NOTCE study resources, including the Online Preparation Course, the Study Guide, and corresponding practice questions, have been revised, and they are currently undergoing final evaluation, with completion expected in spring 2026. Discussions continue with the Occupational Therapy Competency Coordinating Committee, Certification Exam Committee, and Exam Oversight Committee about the updated NOTCE blueprint implementation, and the performance of the September 2026 NOTCE and subsequent administrations will be closely monitored.

By the numbers:
2024-2025 NOTCE

Accreditation Updates

Programs with upcoming accreditation had the option of following the [2019](#) or [2022](#) Accreditation Standards until December 2025.

The Academic Credentialing Council completed revisions to the Academic Accreditation Standards and Self-Study Guide. The updated document adheres to the 2022 Standards, with changes made to specific indicators and within the glossary of terms. The revised document will be finalized and translated in early 2026.

In 2025, the University of Saskatchewan commenced the initial steps towards academic accreditation, with the support of CAOT, as they prepare to welcome its first cohort into the new MSc. OT program in September 2026.

3 exams
(December 2024, April 2025,
September 2025)

720 Canadian-educated writers,
93.8% pass rate

140 internationally educated writers, 78.6%
pass rate

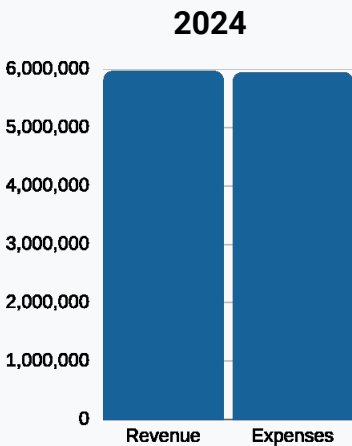
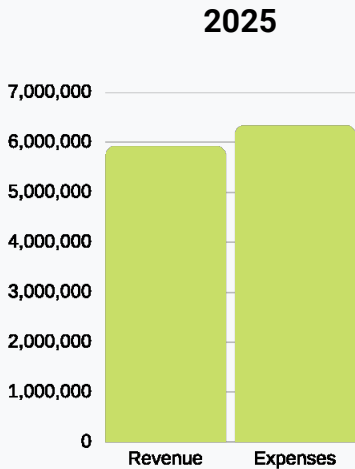
860 writers total, pass rate 90.1%



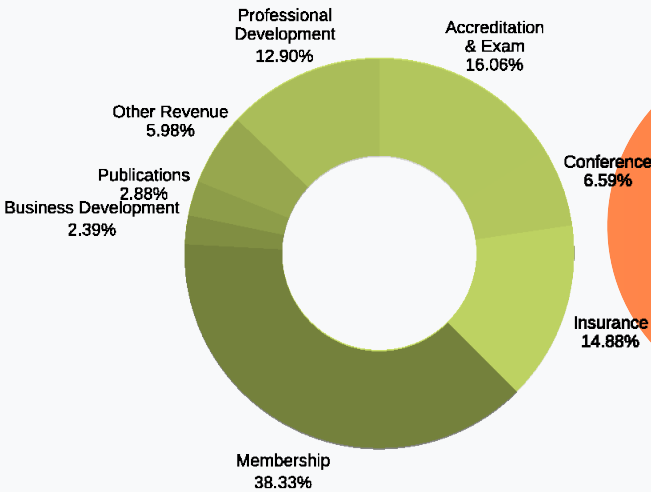
FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS 2024-2025

This information is intended as a brief summary of CAOT finances. CAOT members may request a copy of the audited financial statements by contacting national office at 1-800-434-2268 ext. 227 or by emailing finance@caot.ca. The report will be presented at CAOT's Annual General Meeting on March 16, 2026, from 12-1:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. For information, please visit www.caot.ca/agm.

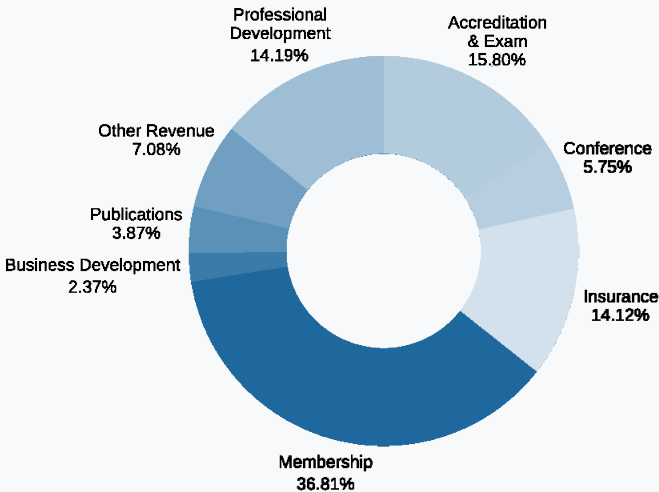
CAOT REVENUE AND EXPENSES (\$MILLIONS)



CAOT REVENUE ALLOCATION 2025



CAOT REVENUE ALLOCATION 2024



CAOT ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

BOARD AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Thank you to the many volunteers who contributed their hours and expertise in support of the aims of CAOT. Your tireless work, often behind the scenes, and your passion for the profession, are what make this association truly strong, purposeful, and human.

CAOT Board of Directors (to Sept. 30, 2025)

Lisa Diamond-Burchuk Chair	Marybeth Fleming Nova Scotia (NS)
Nathalie Veillette Vice-Chair	Yvonne Thompson Prince Edward Island (PEI)
Karen Joudrey Treasurer	Danielle Hogan Newfoundland & Labrador (NL)
Sarah Burt-Hawco Secretary	Kaitlynn Dewhirst Territories (NT, NU, YT)
Donna Drynan British Columbia (BC)	Debra Beach Ducharme External Director
Susan Mulholland Alberta (AB) (until June 30, 2025)	Holly Smith Indigenous Director (Interim)
Jesse Dziad Saskatchewan (SK)	Paulette Guitard Director to World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT)
Brenda Semenko Manitoba (MB)	
Karen Rebeiro Gruhl Ontario (ON)	
Marc Rouleau Quebec (QC) (Interim)	
Debbie Le Breton New Brunswick (NB)	

CAOT Committee Chairs (to Sept. 30, 2025)

Executive Committee Lisa Diamond-Burchuk
Governance Sarah Burt-Hawco
Finance, Audit & Risk Karen Joudrey
Awards, Appeals, Complaints Nathalie Veillette
Academic Credentialing Council Jackie Bosch
Certification Examination Committee Leslie Johnson
OT Now Editorial Board Elizabeth Pooley
CJOT Editorial Board Brenda Vrkljan
CAOT-BC Advisory Committee Shelley Dornian

CAOT ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

STAFF

Bandaly, Soëla
Regional Director, CAOT-QC and National Francophone Services Advisor

Bélanger, Fred
Translator

Dettwiler, Christine
Membership Program Manager

Douglas, Alison
Director of Standards (until June 2025)

Elissat, Kathy
Regional Director, CAOT-BC & Yukon

Fakhuri, Salah
Professional Development Coordinator (until June 2025)

Gold, Irving
Chief Executive Officer

Fleming, Christine
Regional Director, CAOT-SK

Fournier, Jade
Communications & Marketing Coordinator

Harold, Kristin
Director of Communications & Marketing

Houde, Chantal
Communications & Marketing Manager

Jadayel, Summar
Professional Development Administrator

Jadayel, Zaina
Member Outreach Administrator

Jecker, Justine
Director of Professional Practice

Jolliffe, Tracy
Business Development Coordinator

Lafortune, Vicky
Finance Coordinator

Lamontagne, Christina
Professional Development Manager (maternity leave until August 2025)

Law, Haidee
Director of Standards (as of June 2025)

Lizon, Monique
Advocacy & Policy Manager

McEwen, Candice
Public Affairs Manager

McGovern, Ryan
Exam Services and Accreditation Officer

McLean, Chantal
Member Outreach Coordinator

Montour, Émilie
Project Manager – IEOT Project

McMillan, Terry
Creative Lead

Reid, Michael
Director of Finance & Administration

Rochon, Stephane
Customer Serv. Representative – Membership & Bus. Development

Roussel, Taylor
Professional Development Coordinator (until September 2025)

Séguin, Josée
Director of Knowledge Translation Programs

Sheehan, Lisa
Conference & Events Manager

Snell, Shauna
Human Resources and Office Administration Manager

St. Louis, Randy
Membership Services, Business Development & IT

Stewart, Maegan
Executive Assistant

Talalaeva, Anna
Professional Development Coordinator (maternity leave until August 2025)

Taylor, Sonja
Payroll & Finance Coordinator

Van Dam, Lauren
Professional Practice Administrator



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