



AWHsome

Newsletter of Advancement of Women Halton

AWH is a collaborative of twenty women's groups and social agencies that advocate and amplify the voice of women. The monthly meetings give us an opportunity to hear about the activities and challenges of member organizations. This newsletter is another avenue for readers to learn about AWH member activities during the previous month.



February 2026

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JANUARY HAPPENINGS

In the first few weeks of 2026 news of women all but disappeared, pushed out of the headlines by stories of invasion, warfare, kidnapping and geopolitical blackmail. Women remain significantly underrepresented in news coverage and leadership roles, often appearing in less than a third of news stories.

It is time to end the Doom and Gloom!

On January 1st in the New Year's Honours list the **Honourable Rosalie Silberman Abella** was awarded the Order of Canada

Rosalie Silberman Abella is an icon of Canadian values. Born in a displaced persons camp to Holocaust survivors, she became the first Jewish woman on Canada's Supreme Court. She set the bar with her landmark constitutional law rulings and shaped equality and human rights worldwide. She is now an esteemed professor at the Harvard Law School.



Longtime Liberal the **Hon. Chrystia Freeland**, Canadian politician and former journalist who served as the 10th deputy prime minister of Canada from 2019 to 2024, announced on January 3rd she would accept a new role advising Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

"Ukraine is at the forefront of today's global fight for democracy, and I welcome this chance to contribute on an unpaid basis as an economic adviser," she wrote on social media hours after the president announced her appointment. There was some controversy after her initial announcement, around potential foreign influence in Parliament, and so on January 9th, she stepped down, bidding Parliament farewell.



Childcare and the Budget

Thursday January 15: Becky Andrade of Milton Community resource Centre was invited to attend a pre-budget consultation opportunity with the Minister of Finance. This was a great opportunity to reinforce the message of needing a strong and long-term plan for child care and Becky hoped to provide a compelling statement on why the province investing in child care will be the backbone of any other economic investment they intend to make

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CDH January 19 National Housing Day 2025 Report Executive Summary

National Housing Day 2025 brought together approximately 150 community members in Halton including people with lived experience, housing and social service providers, faith groups, municipal and regional staff and elected officials.

Hosted by Community Development Halton, the event focused on moving from understanding the housing crisis to strengthening connection, collaboration and action across the community.

Participants shared a common understanding that Halton is facing a deepening housing crisis, driven by rising homelessness, unaffordable rents and declining access to home ownership.

The event concluded with clear calls to action: build stronger collaboration across sectors, show visible public support for housing developments, improve access to information about civic processes and expand community-led housing solutions.

Community Development Halton hosted an inspiring follow-up session in January to share next steps and support continued collective action toward housing for all in Halton.

[Read more including summaries](#) from AWH members Marianne Singh-Waraich and Tina Agrell

COMING THIS MONTH



Join Us for

New Year Around the World!

February 5: Get ready for a celebration like no other! We're bringing the magic of global New Year traditions together in one unforgettable event.

Let's welcome the new year with unity, diversity, and celebration. We can't wait to see you there on **February 5 @ 4:00 PM**, Burlington Centre, 777 Guelph Line, Burlington.



FEBRUARY IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH

CCAH Black History Month 2026 Launch Concert

February 2: Join us on Monday, Feb. 2 from 5:45 to 8:00 pm at The Oakville Centre for Performing Arts to celebrate the launch of Black History Month 2026.

The evening will feature Emcee [Ann Marie Green](#), musical performances by [The Band Destiny](#), a keynote presentation by actor, musician, and educator [Sean Mauricette](#) combining history, poetry, and live sound, and a CCAH Steel Band and Parang Ensemble collaboration.



Out of Many Cultures, One People: an Afro-Caribbean Collective, is a curated exhibition celebrating the richness and diversity of Black cultural expression while affirming a shared sense of identity and belonging. Participating artists reflect on heritage, memory, migration, and resilience, revealing how distinct cultural traditions converge into a collective Black experience. This exhibit will be on display in the QEPCCC Main Gallery in Oakville and the Holcim Gallery in Milton.

Join us for the Opening Reception at QEPCCC Main Gallery on **February 1** from 2:00-4:00pm, featuring a live harp performance by [Pearl Schachter](#), inspired by the legacy of H.T. Burleigh, whose work bridged ancestral traditions and classical music on a global stage.

Join us for the Artist Reception at Holcim Gallery **February 21** from 2:00-4:00pm

February 15: Roots, Rhythm and Resilience: A Tribute to Black Music with Burlington Concert Band -

Join us on Feb. 15 at 2:00pm at The Holiday Inn Burlington Conference Centre by IHG as CCAH Steelpan and Parang bands team up with the [Burlington Concert Band](#) for a one-of-a-kind performance blending traditional, classical, and Caribbean music. Don't miss this vibrant musical celebration!



February 18 : Clement Virgo's film *Brother*

Join us on **February 18 at 7:30 pm** at [Film.ca](#) in Oakville for a screening of Clement Virgo's film *Brother*, an adaptation of the acclaimed novel by Trinidadian-Canadian author David Chariandy, presented in partnership with the [Oakville Festivals of Film & Art](#) and [Film.ca Cinemas](#).

Following the movie, the evening will continue with a dynamic panel discussion and audience Q&A featuring a representative from the film, offering deeper insight to the film and connection to our Black History Month theme.

February 25: Exploring Black History in our Backyard with OPL

Join [Oakville Public Library](#) and the CCAH on Feb. 25 at 7:00pm for an engaging **virtual session** that brings local Black history to life.

Discover the rich stories, voices and heritage of Black communities in Oakville. Together, we'll explore community perspectives and lived experiences that highlight the longstanding presence, contributions and resilience of Black residents.

FEBRUARY IS HEART HEALTH MONTH

February is Heart Month in Canada for 2026, focusing on raising awareness for heart health, with a major emphasis on women's heart health.

For more information on women's heart health, see both [Canadian Women's Heart Health Alliance](#) and the [Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada](#)

February 13: Wear Red Canada Day held annually on **Feb. 13** encourage Canadians to wear red, get active, and support life-saving programs for women.

For more information on the event, see [Wear Red Canada](#)



Halton Equity & Diversity Roundtable

Nominations are now open for the **Pride in Equity Awards**, HEDR's annual celebration of individuals, organizations, and initiatives advancing equity, justice, and inclusion across the nonprofit sector. These awards uplift work rooted in lived experience, community accountability, and meaningful change, especially the efforts that often go unrecognized.

For more information concerning nominations and HEDR, please see their [webpage](#).

February 19 CDH film on Affordable Housing

"Thinking Beyond the Market: A Film about Genuinely Affordable Housing" by Dr. Brian Doucet (University of Waterloo).

Film Screening and Q&A Panel with Dr. Doucet & Community Development Halton Team @ [Film.ca](#) 171 Speers Road Oakville

6 to 8:30pm FREE Registration:
<https://www.cdhalton.ca/events>

[For more information](#)

THINKING BEYOND THE MARKET:
A film about genuinely affordable housing
Film by Dr. Brian Doucet, University of Waterloo

Hosted by
Community Development Halton

Supported by
film.ca cinemas

Register
<https://www.cdhalton.ca/event-list>

DATE: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19TH, 2026
TIME: 6:00-8:30 PM
LOCATION: FILM.CA, 171 SPEERS ROAD, OAKVILLE

COMING SOON

International Women's Day March 8th

International Women's Day 2026 (IWD 2026), under the theme, "Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL Women and Girls", marks a moment to amplify our collective determination. No matter how deeply rooted the sexism or how discouraging the politics, we refuse to step back or abandon our mandate. Instead, we climb together – for the rights and empowerment of all women and girls.

This year, IWD 2026 calls for action to dismantle the structural barriers to equal justice: discriminatory laws, weak legal protections, and harmful practices and social norms that erode the rights of women and girls.

[Read More](#) from UN Women

March 4

THE GLOBE AND MAIL PRESENTS

Thriving at Work:

Prioritizing Women's
Mental Wellness – Part 2:
From Awareness to Action

PRESENTING
SPONSOR



REGISTER NOW

FREE VIRTUAL EVENT

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 2026 | 12:00 P.M. – 1:00 P.M. ET

From the Canadian Women's Foundation, a collaboration with the Globe & Mail

Something that might be of interest to our members.

[For more information](#)

ISSUES & NEWS FROM AWH, OUR MEMBERS and PARTNERS

Child Care

Child Care Now, the OCBCC, and their partners and allies have sent letters to Ministers ahead of their meetings that were held January 29th and 30th calling on them to commit to strengthening and expanding \$10aDay.

As asked as support, AWH forwarded these letters to all of our MPs and MPPs including our letter of support.

Advancement of Women Halton has advocated for and supported the development of a system of early learning and childcare that is universal, quality, accessible and inclusive.

Canada Wide Early Learning and Childcare (CWELCC) program is the right thing to do for the present and the future. It provides stability for early learning and childcare operators with legitimate costs covered, allows for the further development of childcare spaces thus addressing long wait lists and accessibility issues in underserved areas, allows for the development of early childhood education as a respected and decently paid career option, and, most important provides security and economic support to Ontario families who are living through great uncertainty in this turbulent time.

We join with the other signatures of the attached OCBCC and Child Care Now letters encouraging our governments to support and strengthen the program.

[For more information on the letters from Child Care Now and OCBCC.](#)

Environment



GASP (Grandmothers Act to Save the Planet) has as usual been busy on multiple fronts.

Canada Watch concerns:

- Carbon pricing
- Transport of nuclear waste – We the Nuclear Free North are concerned about spent fuel storage and its transportation to deep geological repository by road through communities which have not been consulted.
- Bill C-15 that will make projects exempt from environmental impact assessments.
- Bill S-238 Climate Aligned Finance Act, Sen. Rosa Galvez – supporting this

Ontario Watch concerns:

- Conservation Authority Amalgamation
- Proposed use of Provincial Parks as Adventure Playgrounds – a proposed public/private partnership
- Continuing concern about Hwy 413.

[For more information](#) about their activities see **GASP newsletter**

Gender-based Violence



Thrive Counselling continues to advocate for the new Halton 360 Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Violence and Human Trafficking Service hub for survivors in conjunction with all of our local hub service partners. In the wake of a compelling demonstration for the need for a one stop shop service for survivors with multiple service needs, we are hugely committed to ensuring that this service continues beyond the end of our WAGE grant this March.

In November 2025, we were joined by our fellow hubs from across the province as well as a national audience to host a knowledge exchange event to share resources and wisdom about developing and sustaining successful GBV service hubs. We are grateful for the support of the Halton Region in allowing us to sustain this important work for another year as well as for their

support to the Halton Violence Prevention Council's initiatives to support our community agencies, businesses and individuals to take actions towards helping to end gender-based violence.

Thrive continues to offer individual, couple and family counselling to Halton residents. We currently have some fully subsidized services for youth, Burlington Seniors, Men's Counselling Link and our Burlington Walk-In Clinic.

NEWS FROM LOCAL POLITICIANS and LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

News from MPP Effie Triantafilopoulos:

Primary Care Teaching Clinics

Our government is investing up to \$8 million to plan 16 new and expanded primary care teaching clinics that will help connect 300,000 more people to primary care.

Part of the \$2.1 billion Primary Care Action Plan, each clinic will receive up to \$500,000 and partner with Ontario's medical schools to train family medicine residents in team-based settings alongside nurse practitioners, physician assistants and registered nurses.

These clinics will combine hands-on learning with direct patient care and are expected to begin opening in 2027–28, with further expansion to follow. Two additional clinics at Toronto Metropolitan University will bring the total to 18.

This initiative will strengthen primary care teams, reduce underserved patients and improve access to reliable care across Ontario



A podcast from **Doreen Nicoll's Small Change** about Burlington Mayor Marianne Meed Ward on Basic Income and Elect Respect Campaign

<https://doreenn.substack.com/p/mayor-marianne-meed-ward-is-improving>

INFORMATION FROM ALLIES



On Wednesday December 3, the [*International Day of Persons with Disabilities*](#), DWP hosted our first virtual research symposium:

- [Disability Poverty in Canada: Learning from Today to Make Tomorrow Better](#) and
- We launched the [3rd Annual Disability Poverty Report Card!](#)

It was a full day that brought together lived experts, advocates, academics, and community leaders for a rich day of learning and exchange. Did you miss it? No worries! Recordings of all live discussions coming soon. Pre-recorded poster presentations and talks are available for viewing on our [YouTube channel](#).

grandmothers
Advocacy Network



Mouvement de soutien des
grands-mères

This year **Grandmothers Advocacy Network** will be focusing our advocacy efforts on improving global access to water, sanitation and hygiene, otherwise known as “WASH”.

The United Nations has declared access to water and sanitation a human right, fundamental to health, dignity and prosperity, and essential to the realisation of all other rights. However, lack of sustainable and safe water, sanitation and hygiene remains one of the greatest global challenges facing low-income countries. Progress has been slow. The world is not close to meeting this Sustainable Development Goal by 2030.

GRAN launched the 2026 WASH campaign with a learning event –“Change Starts With Water” on Wednesday January 28. The guest speaker Julie Trulove, Head of Policy and Advocacy at WaterAid Canada, provided an introduction to all things WASH and made the case for action.



OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

Doing the math on motherhood

By Ann Hui Globe and Mail Jan 13, 2026

As part of a study published last month in “Critical Perspectives on Accounting”, Orlane Couchoux, professor of accounting at Carleton University, interviewed Canadian women to understand how motherhood affects financial decision-making.



Beyond the widely recognized gender income gap and “motherhood penalty” mothers quietly absorb a wide range of other hidden costs.

The cultural and societal expectations of what a “good mother” should be, really shape how women relate to money after becoming mothers.

Mothers bought new clothes for their kids but kept wearing their own 20-year old clothes. They stopped doing things they loved as leisure activities. They started saving for their children’s education but significantly decreased or stopped contributing to their own retirement.

Daily costs such as food, clothing, school supplies and activities are seen as smaller amounts, to be left to Mom, unlike the big financial decisions that need to be discussed, analysed and shared by both partners.

Many women felt as a mom they should be independent and provide for their children without needing anyone else to pay for the expenses. It was almost taboo to calculate or track how much they spend on their children. Rather than discussing or negotiating with co-parent on whether purchases were justified, mothers just paid themselves.

Prof. Couchoux concludes it is important to consistently track how much is spent on children, including clothes, food, activities, daycare, school and transportation. Then have explicit financial conversations with the co-parent to talk about what the expenses are and who covers them, how savings are divided and how caregiving affects income. These are not comfortable conversations but they are important. Silence can lead to inequality, even in relationships that think of themselves as loving and supporting - and silence can also lead to the sacrifice of a mother’s long-term financial security.

A Wage for Housework?

BBC news, Dec.8, 2025

Soutik Biswas India correspondent

In a village in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, a woman receives a small but steady sum each month - not wages, for she has no formal job, but an unconditional cash transfer from the government.



Premila Bhalavi says the money covers medicines, vegetables and her son's school fees. The sum, 1,500 rupees (\$16: £12), may be small, but its effect - predictable income, a sense of control and a taste of independence - is anything but.

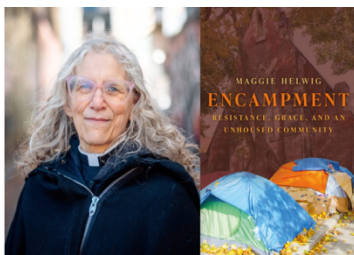
Across India, 118 million adult women in 12 states now receive unconditional cash transfers from their governments, making India the site of one of the world's largest and least-studied social-policy experiments.

Long accustomed to subsidising grain, fuel and rural jobs, India has stumbled into something more radical: paying adult women simply because they keep households running, bear the burden of unpaid care and form an electorate too large to ignore.

Eligibility filters vary - age thresholds, income caps and exclusions for families with government employees, taxpayers or owners of cars or large plots of land.

"The unconditional cash transfers signal a significant expansion of Indian states' welfare regimes in favour of women," Prabha Kotiswaran, a professor of law and social justice at King's College London, told the BBC.

[Read more](#)



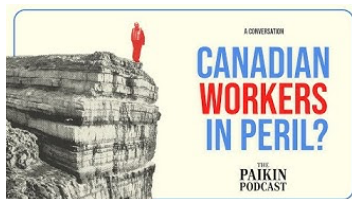
An excerpt from "Encampment: Resistance, Grace, and an Unhoused Community" by Maggie Helwig Anglican priest and pastor at St. Stephen-in-the-Field, winner of the 2025 Toronto Book Award.

"I am writing this because I want you to understand my world, the world I live in, and the world I live alongside. I have been an Anglican priest since 2012; I have been the priest at St. Stephen-in-the-Fields, in Kensington Market in Toronto, since 2013. We have had an encampment in our churchyard since about the spring of 2022. I am writing this because I want you to understand that this is a world of real people, who struggle and are kind, who are often special and beautiful in ways that most of our society cannot and does not try to understand.

I write because I don't dress very well, and my hair isn't very good, and I look more like I belong in the world of the encampment than in the world of the others. Because people on the street, exhausting as they can often be, have also been kind to me, and to my (autistic) daughter, more consistently than almost anyone else.

And I am writing this because we are standing at the edge of catastrophic climate breakdown and the fall of a long empire, and all the collateral damage which the fall of an empire brings. The only way that we, the small and the ordinary, might survive in any decent way is if we learn to take care of each other, to do it deeply and consistently and in ways that will change how we think and how we live.

Remember that if you rely on government support – here in Toronto, Ontario Works (OW) or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) – your income is so low that even doubling it instantly would leave you far below the poverty line. Remember that we have chosen, as a society, to set social assistance rates at a fraction of what we acknowledge is necessary to survive; that, essentially, to be on social assistance – to be disabled, to be old, to be laid off and looking for work – is to be told that you don't really deserve to live. Certainly not to live indoors.”



Steve Paikin talks to Armine Yalnizyan about the Budget and the Care Economy

“This is where Yalnizyan introduces her economic approach, one few others seem to be championing. “It’s stupid not to incorporate the care economy in our budgeting,” she says. “It’s the foundation and economic engine of our economy.”

What does she mean? Consider education, child care, health care, and long-term care. Combined, those sectors make up a massive share of the Canadian economy, which Yalnizyan calls the care economy. “It’s all about the care, nurturing, and maintenance of our bodies. It’s one-and-a-half times bigger than manufacturing. It’s two times bigger than housing. And it’s three times bigger than mining, and oil, and gas.”

Yalnizyan is frustrated when she hears experts talk only of the housing crisis or the difficulty building a new pipeline, while the care economy continues to be ignored.

“Twenty-one per cent of our jobs are in the care economy,” she continues. “No one talks about it that way. We talk about oil and gas all the time, but what about this sector that makes or breaks your life?”

[Read More](#)

New study finds female family doctors spend more time caring for patients yet earn less.

<https://www.oma.org/newsroom/news-releases/2026/january/new-study-finds-female-family-doctors-spend-more-time-caring-for-patients-yet-earn-less/>

Ontario Medical Association Jan. 15, 2026

A new study shows female family physicians spend 15 to 20 per cent more time with their patients than their male colleagues across a wide range of clinical visits, revealing what physicians have long reported anecdotally.

The findings are being published on Jan. 14 in the journal *Canadian Family Physician* from researchers with Healthcare Evaluative Research (HER) at the Ontario Medical Association and McMaster University, which supports OMA research on the gender pay gap.

Paired with a [2021 JAMA study](#) that analyzed data from more than 30,000 physicians and found a [13.5 per cent pay gap between male and female physicians](#), the findings suggest women in family medicine are delivering more care per patient but earning less overall for the additional time spent.

...

Spending more time with patients matters. Family doctors who listen closely and communicate effectively are more likely to uncover critical details, make accurate diagnoses, and build trust. Patients who feel heard report stronger relationships with their physicians and have better health outcomes, yet the compensation system generally rewards speed.

Current payment models do not account for time spent, thereby potentially structurally disadvantaging female physicians in terms of overall earnings, said Dr. Boris Kralj, an adjunct assistant professor at the McMaster University Department of Economics and the Centre for Health Economics and Policy Analysis (CHEPA).

...

Over the course of a year, this difference amounts to an estimated income gap of about \$45,500 for a physician working a standard schedule.

To truly close the gender pay gap in medicine, researchers are urging the adoption of a compensation model that values patient outcomes, not patient volume. Fair pay should reflect both the quality and quantity of care delivered, especially when better care leads to healthier patients.

The study also found the gender gap in service times was less pronounced among international medical graduates and physicians who completed residency training outside Canada, suggesting that training and cultural norms influence practice styles.

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[Read more](#)

AWH note: It should be noted that 60% of doctors use the capitation system, which pays doctors a fixed, pre-set annual fee for each patient in their roster, regardless of how often that patient visits, encouraging proactive, preventative care. This model, common for Ontario family physicians (often in FHO models), focuses on comprehensive, long-term care, adjusting payments based on patient age and complexity.

Trump administration plan to reduce access to some student loans angers nurses, health care groups

By Collin Binkley and John Seewer | The Associated Press • NBC Universal, Inc.

Students studying across nearly a dozen industries nationwide could soon see deep cuts to their federal student loan limits after the U.S. Department of Education redefined which degrees it consider “professional,” reports NBC 7’s

Students pursuing graduate degrees in nursing, physical therapy, public health and some other fields would face tighter federal student loan limits under the plan because it doesn't consider them professional programs.

The revamp is part of [Trump’s “Big Beautiful Bill”](#) passed by Congress.

While graduate students could previously borrow loans up to the cost of their degree, the new rules would set caps depending on whether the degree is considered a graduate or professional program.

The Education Department is defining the following fields as professional programs: pharmacy, dentistry, veterinary medicine, chiropractic, law, medicine, optometry, osteopathic medicine, podiatry and theology.

Left out are nursing, physical therapy, dental hygiene, occupational therapy and social work as well as fields outside of health care such as architecture, education and accounting.

While the plan is still being finalized, the new student loan caps would take effect next July.

[Read more](#)



ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN HALTON
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