



## Care for the Caregivers: Ask the Expert

"Thank you to the first-responders and caregivers for all they **confront** and **do** every day!"

To listen to the Ask the Expert segment with Dr. Peggy O'Neil visit:

<https://www.iheartradio.ca/newstalk-1290-cjbk/shows/ask-the-experts-1.1839348>

### A. The Expert:

**Dr. Peggy O'Neil, PHEc.**

*Brescia University College, Lecturer in Human Ecology and Home Economist*

About Dr. O'Neil:

- Raised on a family farm near Ontario's west coast and has been cared for in this community her entire life.
- A "born" home economist---her favourite childhood books were *Squirrel Nutkin* about the adventures of gathering nuts for the winter; and, *The Tawny Scrawny Lion* about friendship and carrot soup).
- Completed 18 4-H Homemaking clubs ranging from quilting to camping.
- Worked in several community and research hospitals in Ontario, served approximately 4 million therapeutic meals on a budget (less than average \$8.00/day for 3 meals, 3 snacks) to patients receiving care across several clinical specialties, from infants to residents over 100 years old.
- Lecturer in the School of Food and Nutritional Sciences since 2008 at Brescia University College (areas of expertise: leadership & food management, design, housing, and communications).
- Member of the Ontario Association for Home Economics.
- Coordinating Editor for the International Journal of Home Economics (areas of expertise: policy, ethics, sustainability, and ecopedagogy).
- Education Representative for the Middlesex-London Food Policy Council.
- Recently attended the United Nations headquarters in New York City for the 58th Session of the Commission for Social Development United Nations to address women's land rights in the Global South. (representative for the International Federation for Home Economics)

### B. About Home Economists and the OHEA

Home economists are **licensed professionals** and the association is governed by its own **Ontario legislation**, the *Ontario Home Economics Association Act* (1989). There are education requirements, entrance to practice stipulations, and membership standards as well as ethical guidelines.



A little over a hundred years ago, home economics originated from and, today, continues to work toward its **democratic foundations** which are based on the right of the individual to ownership and income.

The OHEA and its members focus on the uniqueness of each **household** as an individual's distinct **expression of humanity** represented through **food, clothing, housing** and **personal finance**. We contribute to research, resources, and advocacy in these areas. We want to help care providers attain their personal goals.

OHEA members wish to acknowledge and thank caregivers and first-responders for all they do. This is why the association has created the *Care for the Caregiver* series, available at [www.ohea.ca](http://www.ohea.ca). While there are many areas that home economists help, the Ask the Expert segment focused on two priorities: food and finance.

### **C. Care for the Caregiver: FOOD**

While not at work, caregivers experience the same pressures as everyone else. Food is top-of-mind for people. Amid the abundance of food-related discourse, it is important to go back to basics and remember the primary **purpose of food**---building and maintaining a healthy, highly functioning body. Caregivers need high-quality, nutritious food in order to have the stamina, energy, and general health to continue to care for others. The two main food-related requests for help that home economists receive are a) **healthy eating** on a budget during Covid-19 and b) avoiding and managing **food waste**.

#### **Healthy eating during Covid-19**

Home economists work closely with and defer to Registered Dietitians to provide evidence-based, proven strategies for healthy eating. Dietitians of Canada has created **scientific advice** for everyone, including caregivers, about how to eat nutritiously during Covid-19, available at UnlockFood.ca:

<https://www.dietitians.ca/News/2020/Advice-for-the-general-public-about-COVID-19>

#### **Supporting a healthy immune system**

For optimum health, home economists and Registered Dietitians know that nutrients work as a team---not as a solo act. Healthy eating, including supporting a strong immune system, is based on a daily diet rich in fruit and vegetables, protein foods and whole grains. A **variety of foods** containing many nutrients contribute to normal immune function. For more information, caregivers can visit UnlockFood.ca:

<https://www.dietitians.ca/News/2020/Advice-for-the-general-public-about-COVID-19>



## High quality food on a budget

Buying nutritious food does not have to result in a high grocery bill. There are several **purchasing and menu planning strategies** available to caregivers by searching the OHEA website to find articles such as, *Pack a Healthful, Budget-Friendly Lunch* at: <https://www.ohea.on.ca/blog/pack-a-healthful-budget-friendly-lunch>

Or, for **reliable information** sheets and recipes caregivers can read and use the Dietitians of Canada resource, *Food Choices When Money is Tight* at: <https://www.unlockfood.ca/en/Articles/Budget/Food-choices-when-money-is-tight-Budget-friendly.aspx>

## Avoiding and managing food waste

Home economists recommend many methods for caregivers to help them eliminate or reduce food waste. Two important approaches are to establish and control household food inventory and to use leftovers.

### Establishing a household food inventory: Know your targets

Many people are familiar with the phenomenon, “*I just bought groceries... but we have nothing for supper!*” This can be a common experience when purchasing food without a goal or plan. It is important for caregivers to know their dietary targets from which appropriate food (ingredients) can be purchased to combine into healthy, efficient meals. **Canada’s Food Guide** provides well researched recommendations for the variety and distribution of foods needed each day: <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/>

To establish targets for what kind of food and how much of it is needed each week, use Canada’s Food Guide to list daily intake requirements for each person in the family. Next, multiply this number for each person by 7 days to identify weekly needs. This number represents the basic household food inventory for the week. Review and incorporate other suggestions, for example, about fat, sodium and processed foods. Then, having **established the amounts** and portion sizes of protein foods, whole grain foods, and vegetables and fruits are needed for the week, the fun part comes!

Each week, the whole family can work together to see what is in season, on sale, or new and interesting to determine how various foods can be **combined in different ways** into creative and delicious recipes and meals to meet intake requirements. Home economist, Getty Steward, PHEc, has provided a meal planning chart to help organize shopping lists: <https://www.ohea.on.ca/blog/healthy-eating-and-rising-food-prices>



Knowing and controlling a household's basic food inventory based on an **integrated, daily intake** approach will go a long way to reduce buying food that does not combine well with other items purchased which results in, "nothing to eat" or food spoilage.

### **Leftovers: A new life for uneaten food.**

The topic of leftovers can conjure up notions of disinterest or urges to order out. This need not be the case, especially when caregivers deserve interesting, delicious meals. Home economists have discovered countless **ways to reinvent** almost any food left in the fridge or cupboard. For ideas and inspiration, visit the OHEA website:

<https://www.ohea.on.ca/apps/search?q=leftovers>.

Or, for more suggestions how to use what you have and make ingredient substitutions, visit the Government of Canada: Healthy Eating during Covid-19:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-nutrition/healthy-eating/covid-19.html>

## **D. Care for the Caregiver: FINANCE**

Although, for the most part, caregivers have been working during this unusual time, they are not exempt from resultant financial stresses and economic pressures. Spouses, children and, in some cases, parents have been directly affected by current times which in turn presents demands on caregivers' personal financial resources. Some federal funding is scheduled to close, mortgage payment delay periods are ending, and the soon-to-finish short term interest rate reductions on credit cards are all circumstances that are creating worry. Fortunately, experts and resources exist to help establish, plan, and manage caregiver personal finances.

### **Individualize Solutions**

Frequently, home economists specialize in personal finance counselling and management. Nationwide and in London offices, some of the best resources for Canadians and their families were created in part by an Ontario home economist and author working at the Credit Counselling Society. The organization's mission to help, educate, and give hope.

The first step by which caregivers can predict and control their financial needs is to determine goals for a **standard of living** and **way of life** from which realistic and measurable targets and timelines can be set. Information on budget preparation and monitoring processes, as well as templates and calculators are offered free of charge by the Credit Counselling Society at: <https://www.nomoredebts.org/budgeting/budgeting-tips> and <https://www.mymoneycoach.ca>



## Identify patterns and triggers

Once caregivers' have worked out goals, budgets and timelines it is a good idea to compare them to **historical realities**. Most Canadian banks provide download features on bank accounts and other products. Caregivers can look back on data from a few months or year in order to objectively observe where income was dispersed. Planned and unplanned spending can be categorized and analyzed against standard of living and way of life goals. During this process, caregivers can isolate patterns of, for example, spending a few dollars here and a few dollars there; of which the total, cumulative sum is substantial especially if the **consequences** mean falling short on higher order goals. An honest comparison between the ideal budget and actual spending may at first be disheartening but is nevertheless helpful. Knowledge is power and the truth will set you free.

## Crisis Management: Communicate!

For various reasons, caregivers or their families may experience overwhelming financial situations. Caregivers help others and **others want to help** them. It is important to understand options to attain with dignity the highest and best outcomes for as many parties as possible. Credit experts such as those at the Credit Counselling Society can help caregivers manage immediate and long-term actions to **re-establish harmony** in their lives: <https://www.nomoredebts.org/contact-us/locations> and <https://www.nomoredebts.org>

## E. In Closing...

For many more ideas and resources, go to our website at [www.ohea.ca](http://www.ohea.ca) and follow us on social media. And, most importantly...

***“THANK YOU, we are here, we are rooting for you!”***  
***- Dr. Peggy O’Neil***