What is respite?
• Taking a short break.
• Time off from the daily routine of caring for a family member.
• Direct support for specific needs.
• Can be offered in different ways, and in different locations — in your home, in an activity centre, or in a centre for a longer stay.

Seeking East Region Caucus’ advice on working together on respite and dementia

In November 2008, Alzheimer Society representatives that included Kathy Wright, Alzheimer Society of Ottawa and Renfrew County Executive Director, met with Mr. Yasir Naqvi, M.P.P. Ottawa Centre, to ask for his help as Chair of the East Region Caucus to bring information about Alzheimer's disease and related dementias and the value of respite for people with dementia and their families to his fellow MPPs.

Our thanks to Mr. Naqvi for raising the dementia issues around the policy recommendations from the study Caregivers and Dementia conducted by the Caledon Institute of Social Policy at the November 21st Caucus meeting.

Note: Caregivers and Dementia can be found at www.caledoninst.org or www.alzheimer-ottawa-rc.org. For more information, please contact the Alzheimer Society of Ottawa and Renfrew County at 613-523-4004 or info@asorc.org.

(please turn over)
The Background:

- Most individuals with dementia living at home are cared for by family members.
- Caregivers of those with dementia are twice as likely to have depression.
- Primary caregivers need relief; that relief is best delivered as respite care.
- On average, after the onset of Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias, the person with the disease lives about 8 - 12 years, and more than one-half of that time is in the person’s home, followed by the rest of the time in a long term care home.
- Respite options can result in fewer crises, a delay in admission to long term care, increased quality of life, and fewer emergency room visits.

The Recommendation:

Continue to support flexible programming such as the “Relief and Respite Program” available in Eastern Counties to ensure respite services are made available to all caregivers of those with dementia throughout the continuum of care (e.g. housecleaning, snow removal, attendant care, etc.)

Local Caregiver calls the Guest House “a breath of fresh air”

George Rust is the primary caregiver for his mother-in-law Irene Coburn who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease three years ago. While Mrs. Coburn enjoyed her stay as a guest at a respite bungalow specially designed with a supportive environment for persons with dementia, Mr. Rust and his family were able to have a worry-free break from caregiving.

“While mom was at the Guest House, we did very little with the exception of being able to relax and not having to worry. It was basically a breath of fresh air.”

What family members have told us after accessing respite ...

“When he comes back, he's usually in really good spirits — being with other people, you know. Doing something, not just sitting at home.”

“My mother likes going to the Day Program. She sometimes has a manicure; she exercises; all kinds of things. I never thought she would go. Now she looks forward to going, and she’s happy to be there.”

“At home, he never knows what to do. It’s always up to me to find things to do. Sometimes, I run out of ideas.”

Dementia Statistics

Champlain region:
- About 16,000 people with dementia.

Ontario:
- 160,000+ now; 184,000+ by the end of 2009
- Of the 184,000+, 15 per cent or one in six are under the age of 65.