

Ontario civic and cottage week

Ontario · Cottage country and civic days



For recreation therapists and activity aides in Canadian long-term care and personal care homes. Print what you need. Leave the rest.

Large type. Short steps. Dementia-safe language. Canadian spelling. One click PDF. No login required for this preview.

Pictures for this week

Use these on a screen or print one page for the program table. They are calm on purpose.



Maple leaves in autumn. Wikimedia Commons, Mabit1, CC BY-SA 4.0.



Apples in a basket. Wikimedia Commons, Oxfordian Kissuth, CC BY-SA 3.0.

Ontario civic and cottage week

Good morning. Here is your week in one place. Keep it calm and flexible. Follow the residents lead.

Staff briefing

Welcome to civic week in Ontario. This is a cottage and community week. Not a history lesson.

Our focus is comfort, nature, and small town pride. Many residents spent August at a cottage, at a family farm, or at a local fair. Some stayed in the city and enjoyed porches, parks, and streetcars.

Use a warm tone. Speak slowly. Offer two choices at a time. It is fine to watch and listen. You do not need to finish every activity.

Canadian spelling is used through this pack. Print the large print calendar for the lounge board.

Reminders for new aides:

- Sit at eye level. Smile first.
- Name what you see. Invite, do not test.
- End early if energy drops. A short good visit beats a long tired one.
- Note favourites for the next shift. Write down what worked.

Civic Holiday in Ontario is the first Monday in August. We keep it low key. Think picnic, music, and gentle lake views.

Seven-day gentle calendar (Mon-Sun) with 2-3 options each day

Pick one or two per day. Repeat favourites. All activities are seated and calm.

Monday: Civic Holiday welcome

1. Morning hello circle with lemonade or iced tea. Offer choice of music. Folk guitar or soft piano.
2. Afternoon lake view slideshow. Loon photos, still water, pine trees. No loud sounds.
3. Porch style singalong. Pick three familiar songs. Keep volume low.

Tuesday: Cottage morning

1. Pine and cedar sensory tray. Pass sprigs, smooth stones, and folded flannel. Invite touch and smell.
2. Cottage postcard colouring. Muskoka chairs, canoes on shore, quiet lakes.
3. Gentle stretch called Paddle and Reach. Seated arm reaches and soft shoulder rolls.

Wednesday: Fair day

1. Small town fair table. Display ribbons, mini pumpkins, jars of jam to look at. Nothing sharp.
2. Guess the baking smell. Apple, vanilla, or maple. Offer a sniff and a choice.
3. Afternoon bingo with large cards and fruit pictures. Small prizes like stickers or tea bags.

Thursday: Niagara calm

1. Fruit tasting. Offer peach slices or apple slices or pear slices. Check diets first.

2. Falls on screen, muted. Slow water views only. Soft music under, or silence.
3. Flower arranging with carnations and greenery. Simple vases for the dining tables.

Friday: City and streetcar

1. Toronto streetcar photos. Red streetcars, Union Station, flower beds at City Hall. Pass photos hand to hand.
2. Neighbourhood chat. Ask: Would you like city stories or small town stories today.
3. Old radio hour. Soft CBC style music and friendly chatter. Keep it short, about 20 minutes.

Saturday: Kitchen party

1. Butter tart tasting, bite size. Or perogy tasting with sour cream on the side. Check diets first.
2. Church basement supper style social. Tea, buns, and hymn or folk background music.
3. Evening puzzle table. Large piece cottage puzzles. No pressure to finish.

Sunday: Quiet Sunday

1. Morning reflections or hymn sing. Offer choice to join or to rest and listen.
2. Hand massages with unscented lotion. One to one. Ask permission first.
3. Sunset pictures and thanks circle. Share one favourite moment from the week.

Group script: Cottage weekend memories (15 min)

Use for groups of 4 to 8. Seated circle. You need lake photos, a soft blanket, and pine sprigs in a jar.

Welcome (2 min) Hello everyone. Glad you are here. We are sharing cottage weekend memories today, gently. There are no right answers. You can talk, listen, or just enjoy the photos.

Look together (4 min) Hold up one photo at a time. Keep your voice calm. Here is a still lake in the morning. Here is a red canoe pulled up on shore. Here is a porch with two chairs. You can say: See what catches your eye. I will wait with you.

Offer choices (5 min) Do not ask: Do you remember. Offer choices instead. Try these lines:

- Would you prefer lake views or forest trails today.
- Would you like to hold the pine or the smooth stone.
- Some folks liked morning coffee on the dock. Others liked evening tea inside. Which sounds nicer to you right now.
- Would you like to hear a short lake story, or enjoy quiet music for a bit.

Pause often. Nod and thank each person who speaks.

If someone cannot recall, say this: That is quite alright. We are just enjoying this together now. Would you like to look at this photo with me for a minute. Never correct details. Follow feelings. If they say peaceful, stay with peaceful.

Close (4 min) Thank you for spending time with me. These shared memories make our week warmer. Offer the blanket to touch. Offer the pine to smell. Would you like the music to stay on, or shall we enjoy the quiet. Note who liked what. Share with the next aide.

Tips: Keep group to 15 minutes. Shorten to 8 minutes if folks tire. Have water nearby.

Three room-bound one-to-one cards (4 steps max)

Card 1: Lake tray visit

1. Knock, greet, and sit at eye level. Offer choice: Would you like company for ten minutes.
2. Set a small tray on the table. Soft cloth, pine sprig, smooth stone, lake photo.
3. Invite touch. Say: Feel what you like. I will sit with you.
4. Close warmly. Say thanks. Note favourite item for care team.

Card 2: Fruit and falls calm

1. Greet and offer choice of peach slices or apple slices. Check diet list first.
2. Play muted falls video or show large print falls photo. Keep volume low.
3. Chat softly. Say: The water looks slow today. Would you prefer music on or off.
4. Leave a flower photo card. Tidy tray. Thank them for the visit.

Card 3: Streetcar and song

1. Bring two streetcar photos and a song sheet with large print.
2. Ask: Would you like city photos or a short song today. Or both for a minute.
3. Look or hum together. Follow their pace. Pause often.
4. End with choice: More music tomorrow, or a quiet visit tomorrow. Record answer.

Civic holiday / local fair notes

Civic Holiday is the first Monday in August in Ontario. Many homes call it Simcoe Day or Heritage Day. Use the name your home prefers.

Keep it simple:

- Decorate with lake colours. Blue, green, and soft white. Paper maple leaves are fine.
- Serve picnic food that fits diets. Lemonade, buns, coleslaw, fruit cups.
- Play low key music on Monday afternoon. Avoid fireworks sounds. Avoid loud crowds on video.
- Local fairs run through late summer. Bring the fair inside. Jam jars to view, ribbons, garden photos, small pumpkins later in season.
- Honour volunteers and farm families. Say thanks. Many residents helped at fall fairs.
- Do not plan outdoor events in high heat. Move to air conditioned lounge. Offer water often.

If your town has a homecoming parade, watch a short clip inside. Mute sirens. Keep lights bright and calm.

Provincial flavour notes

Use these touches through the week. Keep them gentle and familiar.

- Cottage country: Muskoka chairs, pine, still lakes, loons in the distance. Talk about docks, porches, and morning mist. Avoid motor sounds. Prefer quiet paddles and calm water.
- Niagara viewed calmly: Talk about fruit first. Peaches, cherries, apples, pears. Show orchards and flower gardens. For the falls, use still photos or slow muted video. Say: We are viewing from a safe lookout, with a warm drink.
- Streetcars: Red Toronto streetcars, friendly conductors, flower beds downtown. Many residents rode the Queen car or visited Eaton Centre. Pass large photos hand to hand.

- Hockey only if residents ask: Some folks love the Leafs. Others follow local junior hockey like the Otters, Petes, or Knights families of teams. Ask first: Would you like hockey talk today. If yes, keep it light. If no, move to music or nature.
- Perogies and butter tarts: Serve bite size tastes where diets allow. Offer plain perogies with butter or sour cream on the side. Offer plain butter tarts cut small. Ask about family recipes. Write them down if shared.
- Church basement suppers: Tea, buns, baked beans, gentle hymns, friendly hellos. Recreate the welcome feeling. Folded tables, simple centrepieces, soft background music. Thank the helpers by name.

Other Ontario favourites: maple candy in spring, apple picking in fall, butter sculptures at fairs, canal walks in Ottawa, lighthouse photos from Lake Huron.

Dementia-safe notes

Safety and kindness come first.

- No war, crime, scary images, or jump scares. No haunted themes. No sirens or sudden loud sounds.
- No quiz language. Do not say: Do you remember my name. Do you remember this date. What year was this. Try instead: Here is something nice to look at with me. Which one do you prefer.
- Offer choices. Two at a time. Show the items as you name them.
- Keep groups small. Four to eight is best. Lower noise. Face the group. Speak in short sentences.
- Use large print. High contrast. Matte paper to cut glare.
- Watch for fatigue. Rubbing eyes, looking away, restless hands. Offer rest. Say: We can pause here. I will stay a moment.
- Validate feelings. If someone misses home, say: That makes sense. Home matters. Would you like tea or a blanket while we sit.
- Avoid strong scents. Light pine or vanilla only. Ask about allergies.
- Check diets, swallowing needs, and allergies before any tasting. Cut food small. Sit upright for snacks.
- Keep exits clear. Keep cords taped. Keep water lids on near papers.

If someone feels unsettled, lower stimulation. Turn off screen. Offer a familiar blanket. Walk with them if safe, or sit one to one.

Indoor weather backup (ice storm / humidity)

Ontario weather shifts fast. Have a backup ready.

For ice storm or winter power worry:

- Stay warm inside. Blankets, warm drinks, bright lights.
- Play calm fireplace video, muted. No crackling loud sounds.
- Do indoor lake views. Winter pines, snowy docks, cardinals on branches.
- Share storm stories only if calm. Focus on being safe and cosy now. Offer hot chocolate where diets allow.

- Keep flashlights and large print books handy. Charge tablets early.

For summer humidity and smog days:

- Move all programs to air conditioned lounges. Close blinds in afternoon sun.
- Offer water, iced tea, or diluted juice often. Offer cool cloths for hands.
- Pick seated activities. Colouring, fruit socials, music listening.
- Skip outdoor walks. Try hallway strolls in cool morning only, with staff.
- Watch for flushed cheeks or fatigue. Report to nurse promptly. Rest is fine.

General rule: Weather changes the plan, not the warmth. Tell residents: We moved our picnic inside so we stay cool and comfy.

Print list

Print on white or cream paper. Large print where marked.

- Lounge board: Seven day calendar, large print, one page per two days.
- Staff room: Staff briefing, one copy per shift, single sided.
- Group leaders: Cottage weekend memories script, large print, two copies.
- One to one carts: Three room-bound cards, cut to 5 by 7 inch cards, laminated if able.
- Dining tables: Fruit photos and falls lookout photo, colour, letter size.
- Activity tables: Cottage postcards to colour, ten copies. Large piece puzzle sign up sheet.
- Dietary: Tasting list for nurse approval. Butter tarts, perogies, peaches, apples. Note restrictions.
- Backup bin: Indoor weather backup sheet, lake photos set, streetcar photos set, extra crayons.
- Feedback: Favourite notes sheet. Name, date, liked, try again. Leave on clipboard.

Thank you for making this week kind. Sign your name on the board. The next aide will be glad to see what worked.

How to use this PDF

Print the cover in colour if you can. Print the rest in black and white. Leave room cards at the bedside. You do not need to run every program.