



Canadian Centre for
Caregiving Excellence



Supporting Caregivers in the Workplace

Roundtable Report



**November
2024**

Prepared by
4C Strategy

Prepared for
**The Canadian Centre
for Caregiving
Excellence (CCCE)**

A program of the Azrieli
Foundation

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Letter from the Executive Director



Liv Mendelsohn

Executive Director
Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence (CCCE)

At the Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence (CCCE), a program of the Azrieli Foundation, we want Canada to be the best place to give and receive care. Our vision is a Canada where caregiving is valued, caregivers are supported, and those receiving care benefit from strong policies and practices that meet their needs.

Today, one in four Canadians is a caregiver—a number projected to rise to one in two. Supporting caregivers in the workplace is not just important; it's urgent. That urgency drove us to launch the Working Caregiver Project.

62% of caregivers balance work and care, representing 6.1 million employees—or 35% of the labour force. These individuals do this without sufficient recognition or support, often facing significant economic and personal challenges. Yet, workplaces that embrace and support caregivers see measurable benefits: increased employee satisfaction, loyalty, and productivity.

To better understand the needs of working caregivers, in 2023 we conducted a comprehensive review and environmental scan. This foundational work, led by Christa Haanstra of 4C Strategy and Nora Spinks of Work-Life Harmony Enterprises, revealed a promising trend: some organizations are introducing Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and peer-based supports for family caregivers.

To accelerate progress, we convened two national Supporting Caregivers in the Workplace Roundtables on November 5 and 26, 2024. These virtual sessions brought together over 20 participants per session, representing 18 organizations from diverse industries and regions.

This report captures the rich and dynamic roundtable discussions, highlighting panelists' and participants' strong appetite for sharing insights, unlearning outdated practices, and exploring innovative solutions. It also outlines the next steps for CCCE's ongoing focus on working caregivers, reflecting the interest in continuing these important conversations.

As we look ahead in 2025, CCCE is preparing to launch our National Caregiving Strategy, with working caregivers as a key focus. Together, we can build a future where caregiving is fully valued and supported as part of everyday life.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to these important conversations. We are excited to continue this journey with you.

Warm regards,

Liv Mendelsohn

1 in 4 Canadians is a Caregiver

Project Team



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Roundtable Overview

Roundtable Objectives

- Share and learn from others leading/creating Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and other caregiver supports
- Create a community of collaboration to share best practices and ideas to support working caregivers
- Inspire other organizations to create ERGs or supports for working caregivers
- Increase the awareness of needs of working caregivers in organizations (traditional employment)
- Accelerate the pace of development and value of ERGs or support groups for working caregivers in the organizations where they exist

Organizations Represented

Roundtables brought together representatives from organizations spanning public, private, and non-profit sectors. Participants reflected a wide range of industries and included:

- Caregivers Alberta
- City of Vancouver
- ConSoul Inc.
- EY Canada
- Guardian Life
- Long View Systems
- Ontario Chamber of Commerce
- Pleo
- SE Health
- Sun Life
- The Ontario Caregiver Organization
- Work-Life Harmony Enterprises
- WorkSafe BC

In addition to the above, in attendance were representatives from a national professional services firm, labour union, national retailer, financial institution, manufacturing company, technology conglomerate, and a charitable organization.

What is a Working Caregiver?

An employee who cares for a family member or friend with a short or long-term health condition, physical or mental disability, or aging-related need.

-Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence

\$1,300,000,000

In lost productivity per year due to caregiving duties (absenteeism, presenteeism, turnover, etc.)

Roundtable Insights

The Supporting Caregivers in the Workplace Roundtables brought together diverse voices to explore practical ways to support employees balancing work and caregiving. Panelists and participants alike shared insights on fostering supportive cultures, addressing stigma, and creating tailored programs, emphasizing the importance of leadership engagement, flexible policies, and the power of personal stories to inspire change.

Each roundtable began with a powerful story from a working caregiver—thank you, Cynthia Iorio and Theresa Laird, for sharing your challenges and successes. These real-life experiences set the stage for leaders to present innovative workplace strategies, sparking rich discussions on caregiving as “a normal part of life.”

While many organizations are just starting this journey, these roundtables offered a space to exchange insights, learn together, and inspire meaningful action.

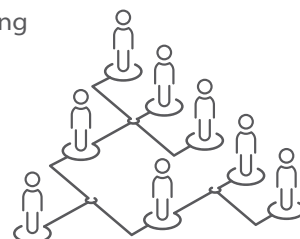
Organizational Structure and Making the Business Case

Leadership Matters

- Senior leaders set the tone, fostering open discussions about caregiving and empowering managers to provide meaningful support.

Middle Management as a Crucial Link

- Middle managers are the primary point of contact for caregivers, but without proper training and support, initiatives often fail at this level.



Key Elements of the Business Case

- Tie caregiver support to employee retention, turnover costs, and bottom-line earnings. Highlight that replacing an employee costs, on average, 1.5 times their salary, along with the loss of institutional knowledge.
- Use ROI data to show how caregiver support aligns with diversity, inclusion, and retention goals.

Anticipating Pushback

- Executives may dismiss caregiving concerns, saying, “If it were that important, we’d already know,” or see it as “just the cost of doing business.”
- Be prepared for skepticism about data, with responses like, “It can’t possibly be that high.” Pair data with personal stories to build credibility and resonance.



Do the math. How much would it cost to replace someone?”

—Nora Spinks, Work-Life Harmony Enterprises



Roundtable Insights

Workplace Culture & Caregiver-Friendly Policies

Building a Positive and Supportive Culture

- Foster trust, open communication, and compassionate, inclusive leadership.
- Engage leaders to sponsor caregiver initiatives and normalize caregiving discussions through shared experiences and personal stories.



Flexible Work Arrangements

- Remote, hybrid, and paid leave benefits are increasingly important for attracting and retaining talent.
- Ensure flexibility is supported by formal policies rather than relying solely on individual managers to promote consistency and equity.

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

- Consider whether your organization would benefit from a membership-based ERG, or non-member based ERG (open invitations, resources openly accessible/web-based).
- Regularly communicate available supports, recognizing that many caregivers don't self-identify until they are deeply involved in caregiving.
- Offer accessible resources such as options for elder care, child illness, and family illness.

Creating Winning Conditions

Know how many Caregivers are in your organization

- Track the number of caregivers in your workforce as a starting point.
- One organization is doing an "Employee Benchmark Survey" to see how many people are caregivers and what type of caregiving they are doing. By better understanding the profile of their working caregivers, they can tailor their supports.

Create Win-Win Partnerships

- Supporting caregivers benefits both employees and organizations, improving well-being, loyalty, and productivity.
- Research shows that employers who care about the wellbeing of their employees have significantly higher staff loyalty rates.
- "Caregivers who feel their employer cares about their well-being are twice as loyal and more likely to want to stay at their job." – *Guardian Life*

Lead with Stories

- Pair compelling data with personal narratives to engage leadership and strengthen the case for caregiver support initiatives.

Roundtable Insights

Challenges in Supporting Working Caregivers

Addressing Stigma

- Caregivers are often unfairly perceived as stressed or less productive. Without addressing the stigma, employee may not want to identify as a caregiver or hesitate to talk about it with their manager. Reframe caregiving as a workforce strength that brings unique skills and perspectives.

Competing Priorities

- Limited resources and budgets can deprioritize caregiver support initiatives. Highlight how caregiving intersects with broader organizational goals like diversity, equity, parenting, and psychological safety.

Tailored Support

- Caregivers need ongoing, personalized support when reintegrating after leave. For bereaved caregivers, there are programs that offer valuable resources, like those from Pallium Canada and the Canadian Hospice and Palliative Care Association (CHPCA).

Employee Offerings and Program Considerations

Inclusive Language

- The term "caregiver" may not resonate with everyone. Use descriptions like "parenting young children," "caring for an aging parent" or "caring for a sibling with a disability" to broaden relevance.

Comprehensive Benefits

- Design offerings to address diverse caregiving roles, including single parents, adult children of aging parents, sibling caregivers and spousal or partner caregivers.

Flexible Work and Leave

- Provide clear, accessible options for remote, hybrid, or flexible work, and communicate paid leave policies effectively.



35%

Proportion of the Canadian labour force that identifies as a caregiver

62%

HR Leaders interviewed during a national survey who did not know how many caregivers were in their organization

Examples of Excellence



Jillian Horn

Recruiting and DEI&B Lead, Long View Systems

Long View Systems, a privately-owned technology services company with over 1,300 employees, is headquartered in Alberta and operates multiple offices across North America.

The organization and leadership promotes a "No Regrets Career" philosophy, emphasizing personal and professional growth through annual and quarterly career check-ins. This approach aligns with its core pillars of integrity, competence, value, and fun.

A cornerstone of this philosophy is the annual Career Life Planning discussion, which provides employees, including working caregivers, an opportunity to discuss their caregiving responsibilities and explore ways the organization can support them in balancing work and home life. These discussions promote a culture of trust and open dialogue.

As part of its Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEI&B) efforts, Long View Systems has established Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) to foster community and inclusivity. While there is no dedicated caregiver ERG, existing groups such as the Women's Alliance, Disability & Ability, and Welcome to Canada often intersect with caregiving themes.

ERGs at Long View Systems play a vital role in building connections among employees, advocating for underrepresented groups, and advising leadership on inclusion and belonging. The following principles offer valuable guidance for organizations considering or evolving caregiver ERGs:

- Align Objectives with Company Values: Reflect core values like integrity, inclusivity, and well-being.
- Embed in the Culture: Ensure ERGs are integral to fostering a supportive, inclusive environment where caregivers feel valued.
- Facilitate Community Building: Create opportunities for caregivers to connect, share experiences, and access support.
- Advocate for Policies and Resources: Use ERGs to raise awareness of caregiver challenges and propose meaningful organizational support.

By integrating these practices, organizations can better support caregivers and strengthen workplace inclusivity.

"There's an opportunity for working caregivers to thrive, but only if their employers see them as partners. When employers see themselves as partners, benefits are bi-directional." – Cynthia Iorio, Working Caregiver

Examples of Excellence



Gene Lanzoni

Head of Enterprise Content, Guardian Life

US-based Guardian Life has made supporting working caregivers a priority, recognizing the importance of providing resources and accommodations for employees balancing work and caregiving responsibilities.

According to Guardian Life's 2023 annual workplace benefit study, over 70% of American workers provide care for a family member, falling into one of three categories: childcare, combined child and elder care, or eldercare.

Gene Lanzoni, co-leader of Guardian's CARE Employee Resource Group (ERG) and a passionate advocate for caregiver support, presented at the Roundtable. Since its launch in 2022, the ERG has grown to more than 1,000 members. A key factor in this growth, according to Gene, was expanding the definition of caregiver to include a wide range of responsibilities—from parenting to caring for family members facing illness, chronic disease, or end-of-life situations. By adopting an inclusive approach to caregiving, Guardian Life has successfully engaged a diverse group of employees through its ERG.

The same study highlighted that, among workers, caregivers report the lowest levels of well-being. In response, Guardian Life emphasizes supporting their well-being by offering workplace resources and benefits, including access to mental health services, a caregiver concierge, flexible work arrangements, and backup care. By ensuring caregivers feel supported and able to care for themselves, Guardian Life empowers them to better care for their loved ones.

Benefits, policies, and initiatives that matter to caregivers

Employer empathy, flexibility, and paid leave are among their top priorities

• Policies and Resources

- Ability to set own schedule
- Paid/unpaid time off
- Financial planning support
- Assisted living resources
- Caregiver contribution matching
- Mental health resources

• Caregiver concierge service

- Caregiver coach / care manager
- 'How to' strategies to help manage: time, relationships, specific conditions, self-care
- Lists of resources available for caregivers and loved ones

• Employee Resource Group

- Virtual support groups
- Success stories
- To feel they are not alone
- Advice and tips for caregiving
- Access to professionals

"Caregivers who feel their employer cares about their well-being are twice as loyal and more likely to want to stay at their job." – *Guardian Life report*

Leading Practices



SE Health

SE Health employs over 8,000 people, with more than 5,000 in direct care roles. A Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-Oppression (DEIA) survey revealed that 43% of employees identify as working caregivers, including those referred to as Double Duty Caregivers—those who work in caregiving roles professionally while also providing care in their personal lives.

SE Health's approach has been highly collaborative, involving Occupational Health, Safety & Wellness, Human Resources (Employee Experience), Elizz by SE Health Caregiver Coach/Navigators, and employees with lived caregiving experience.

In addition to flexible work options, caregiver leave and the Employee Assistance Program, the Working Caregiver Community @ SE Health initiative was developed in response to employee feedback and focus groups. This initiative aims to create a peer support network while addressing the unique challenges faced by Double Duty Caregivers.

Key features of the initiative include:

- Virtual bi-monthly support sessions led by Caregiver Coach/Navigators
- One-on-one support sessions with Caregiver Coach/Navigators
- A centralized intranet hub offering resources and guidance

SE Health's remote and geographically dispersed workforce spans multiple provinces and time zones, posing challenges. The organization remains focused on enhancing accessibility to support the participation of Working Caregivers.

Looking ahead, SE Health is committed to expanding the Working Caregiver Community and incorporating caregiver input into broader organizational initiatives. By continuously evaluating and refining programs, the organization aims to effectively address the unique needs of Double Duty Caregivers.

SE Health's tailored approach, blending peer support and professional guidance, serves as a strong model for organizations looking to support employees balancing work and care at home.

Through this entire journey, I learned how critical it is to have a strong support network. But I also realized we have such a long way to go to support working caregivers – the need is enormous, and until you're in it, it's hard to grasp just how much weight family caregivers carry. It's not just the physical care, but also the emotional load, the constant balancing act, and the pain experienced in making hard choices." – Theresa Laird, Working Caregiver at SE Health

Leading Practices



City of Vancouver

The City of Vancouver serves 700,000 residents and employs 8,600 staff—85% of whom are unionized—in 12 different departments.

The City's 2021 Employee Benchmark Survey revealed that caregivers make up the largest identity group within the organization, accounting for 45% of survey respondents. The organization's working caregivers include parents, eldercare providers and those caring for individuals with physical and mental illness and/or disability-related challenges.

While employee survey data was being gathered, the City's Equity Office invited interested staff to create voluntary, employee-led Employee Resource Groups to support employees in coming together around shared identities and experiences. In response, a Working Caregiver Employee Resource Group (ERG) was established. Its objectives include fostering community connection, offering learning and development opportunities, and raising organizational awareness of opportunities to support caregiving staff, to facilitate their optimum performance, contribution and experience at work.

While the City's Working Caregiver ERG initially operated as a member-based group, it evolved to have a broader reach by maintaining a distribution list of City caregivers and promoting activities, events and resources for applicable staff across the organization.

Key initiatives of the City's Working Caregiver ERG have included:

- Celebrating Caregiver Awareness Month through articles on the City's intranet
- Hosting a caregiver-focused intensive journalling series in partnership with Family Caregivers of BC
- Offering workshops on topics like self-care and building resilience, caregiving for aging family members, fostering work-life integration and navigating grief
- Publishing a list of existing City and external programs and resources that support staff who are caregivers
- Conducting caregiver experience surveys to assess and respond to needs of the City's working caregivers

Supporting working caregivers in a large, complex organization like the City of Vancouver presents some challenges. The Working Caregiver ERG makes every effort to extend its reach to interested staff from across the organization for events and activities. However, some of the hurdles include diversity in types of caregiving, diverse learning and connection needs and interests, geographically dispersed staff, scheduling conflicts and access to technology among field staff, which makes participation in virtual ERG learning events less accessible. City working caregivers also report that having time to engage in the ERG activities can be difficult.

Leading Practices



City of Vancouver cont'd

Examples of current programs available to City employees include:

- A hybrid remote/on-location work program (for those who are eligible)
- Wellness Days or Earned Days Off
- An Employee Family Assistance Program (which includes caregiver-specific supports and resources)

Providing an equity-informed, human-centered approach to supporting City employees who are caregivers, within an organizational context of intersecting equity-seeking groups as well as operational and budget pressures, is a balancing act. At the same time, employees who have lived experience as family caregivers are bringing essential skills and contributions to the organization.

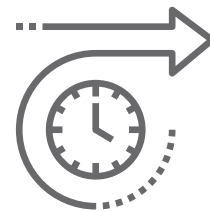
Looking ahead, the City of Vancouver's Working Caregiver ERG intends to continue to share caregiver insights and information with the organization's Equity Office and Human Resources departments as input for employee policies, programs and supports. The ERG will also continue to engage with external partners to stay aware of and aligned with broader working caregiver trends and initiatives.

Through efforts such as advocating for the expansion of data collected on City caregivers in the next employee survey, continuing to foster awareness of this sizable and growing employee demographic group, aligning with relevant broader City strategic frameworks and action plans and continuing with connection and learning opportunities, the City's Working Caregiver ERG remains focused on supporting caregiving staff.

"The opportunities with CCCE have deepened my commitment to this work. Some days we feel like we're barely scratching the surface with our caregiver efforts but then remind ourselves that each incremental step leads to the next ones and has a ripple effect. Hearing from others in the Roundtables has sparked new ideas for us to explore and left me even more keen for continuing connections and discussions with CCCE and fellow colleagues living and working in this caregiver space."

- Michele Pankratz, City of Vancouver

Future Outlook



The roundtable discussions were rich and dynamic, with panelists and participants demonstrating a strong appetite for sharing insights, unlearning old practices, and exploring innovative solutions. Many expressed a clear interest in regrouping in the new year to share updates and track progress.

As interest in supporting working caregivers grows, it's evident that Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are an important approach but are just one option among many in addressing working caregiver needs. Creating workplaces that genuinely support caregivers starts with workplace culture and continues with an ongoing commitment.



The Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence (CCCE) will continue to be a leader in this dialogue. As the number of working caregivers in the workplace rises, we can't lose sight of this group of caregivers and their unique needs for support.

Sharing knowledge, building awareness, amplifying leading practices and convening meaningful discussions are vital steps toward advancing understanding and fostering caregiver-friendly workplaces.

Roundtable Attendee Feedback

"It was an enlightened and passionate discussion and I'm grateful to have been a part of it."

"Thank you for stewarding this necessary dialogue."

"What an amazing group! True leaders on the topic caregiving and workplace trends." – Gene Lanzoni, Guardian Life

Next Steps



Building on the momentum from the roundtable discussions, the next steps aim to deepen the dialogue, share knowledge, and drive action to support working caregivers. These efforts will ensure that working caregivers are not only recognized but fully supported in workplaces across Canada.

“What if supporting caregivers in the workforce was as common-place as supporting new parents is now?”
- Christa Haanstra, 4C Strategy

Key next steps include:

- Sharing resources and information publicly.
- Honouring and sharing lived experiences as inspiration for change and success.
- Incorporating the needs of working caregivers into the National Caregiver Strategy, being developed by the CCCE.
- Creating dedicated spaces to facilitate ongoing dialogue and collaboration in forums like a Community of Practice.
- Sharing case examples to inspire action and provide practical models for organizations.

Roundtable Attendee Feedback

“The ease of collaboration and communication with everyone (made the Roundtable so meaningful). This smaller group of interested parties made it easy to share.”

“It would be great to have the group reconnect in a few months to see how things are evolving in their organizations and share.”

Contact Us

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4C Strategy is a consulting agency that draws on our deep knowledge of and experience in the healthcare system. We help leaders and innovators who are on the front lines of healthcare renewal and integration come up with creative strategies to solve their most pressing problems, while ensuring that the patient and caregiver voice is embedded in the process.

We are a group of experts and caregivers who live at the intersection of co-design, strategic communications, knowledge mobilization and digital engagement. Our approach is to build your team's capacity and then give you the tools to execute on the strategy yourself. We can then act as long-term advisors, as needed.

4C Strategy is proud to collaborate exclusively with Working Caregivers. They are invaluable partners, whose lived experience has shaped their unique skills and unmatched dedication.

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**Canadian Centre for
Caregiving Excellence**



Appendix I

Online Resources



Online resource links featuring campaigns, programs & services, guides and workplace standards.

Pallium Canada's
Compassionate Workplace
Campaign

The Compassionate Workplace Campaign is designed to help companies improve their 'care culture' by proactively supporting working caregivers and those among us who are grieving.

CAREGIVERS IN THE
WORKPLACE: A Guide for
Employers

Comprehensive guide by the Ontario Caregiver Association

Quick Start Implementation
Guide Carer-Friendly Workplace
Standard

A guide to help organizations implement a comprehensive carer-inclusive and accommodating program. It helps define organizational roles, develop policies and practices, engage senior leaders and employees, communicate and more.

Family Caregivers BC:
Supporting Employed
Caregivers

Guide to identifying and supporting employed caregivers

What is an Employee Assistance
Program (EAP) and What Does it
Cover?

Publication by *Benefits By Design* explaining Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs).

Compass Program for
Employees (Caregivers Alberta)

Employee program that encourages caregivers to balance competing demands that arise when working and caregiving

Lifeworks Employee Benefit
Program (EFAP)

Telus Health (formerly Lifeworks) Employee Benefit Program

Supporting Carer-Workers:
Checklist for Employers

Quick checklist with additional links to get started

CSA B701:17 (R2025), Carer-
inclusive and accommodating
organizations

Link to downloadable copy of CSA Workplace Standards

B701HB:18 – Helping worker-
carers in your organization

Link to downloadable copy of CSA Workplace Standards

Ageing societies — General
requirements and guidelines for
carer-inclusive organizations

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) Workplace Standards

Employer recognition and certification, articles and research reports

[Canada's Top Family-Friendly Employers](#)

Organizations recognized for their HR practices, including daycare assistance; paid personal- and earned-days-off (EDO) programs; flexible work arrangements; compassionate leave and elder care assistance

[Canadian Compassionate Companies Certification](#)

CCC certification, created by the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association, is a trusted way for companies to demonstrate that they provide a compassionate work environment for their teams, particularly for employee caregivers and those experiencing grief

[Caregiving benefits and programs for Canadians](#)

Insights and advice from *Canada Life Insurance* (2024)

[Harvard Business School Report: The Caring Company \(2019\)](#)

How employers can help employees manage their caregiving responsibilities – While reducing costs and increasing productivity (30-page, detailed report with references)

[Your Employees are Also Caregivers. Here's how to support them](#)

2024 Harvard Business Review article with practical suggestions on how to reduce stigma around caregiving. Highlights the skills that caregivers bring to the table as employees.

[Caring for your caregivers is good for business - Empowering employees through impactful caregiving solutions](#)

2024 LifeSpeak report with details on caregiving insurance benefits (coordinating care, advising, community engagement, digital content, etc.). Outlines insurance membership outcomes – Benefits to employees, ROI for companies, etc.

[Caregiver-Friendly Workplaces: Inclusive and accommodating employment practices](#)

Canadian Home Care website with well-organized and comprehensive downloads including research, reports, stories, infographics and guides.

[Will the future of talent be shaped by the flow of an untethered workforce?](#)

Findings from EY's 2024 Work Reimagined Survey.

[Caregiver Employees Bring Unique Value to Companies](#)

2023 Harvard Business Review report making the business case for caregiver-friendly workplaces. Original research that collected stories from caregiver employees demonstrating unique skillsets that positively impact culture, retention, and ultimately the bottom line.

[Supporting Double Duty Caregivers](#)

Policy Brief - Offers 9 recommendations that can help double duty caregivers balance their professional and family caregiving responsibilities. *[Collaborators](#)

[Minister Wong releases report from the Employer Panel for Caregivers](#)

2015 News Release: Employer Panel for Caregivers' report, When Work and Caregiving Collide – How Employers Can Support their Employees Who Are Caregivers, highlights best workplace practices and includes a toolbox of valuable information and resources for employers.



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