



Bringing the faces and voices of family caregivers to Parliament Hill

May 12, 2015, Mississauga – The Canadian Caregiver Coalition (CCC) and the Canadian Cancer Society (CCS) are illuminating the challenges faced by millions of family caregivers to parliamentarians through the launch of a photographic census. Co-hosted by the Honourable Alice Wong, Minister of State (Seniors), this event will increase awareness of the 6.1 million Canadians – parents, colleagues, friends and neighbours – who have to balance their personal commitments, unpaid caregiving duties and work responsibilities. The photographic census is documenting the daily realities caregivers face behind closed doors as they try to balance their career and family caregiving responsibilities the best way they can.

Caring for family, friends and loved ones, once seen as a personal and private matter in family life, has now become one of the most important social policy issues in Canada and in the world. In 2009, it was estimated that family caregivers contribute \$25-26 billion dollars of unpaid care every year, and in 2015 this number is anticipated to be even greater. Caregivers represent more than 35 percent of the Canadian workforce, with the majority in their peak earning years. Family caregivers ensure quality of life, social engagement, and stability to those they love often at the expense of their own well-being. When family caregivers are unable to balance care and work, corporations will incur a net cost of \$1.3 billion per year in lost of productivity.

“The Government of Canada recognizes the important role of caregivers and the challenge many face in balancing work while taking care of a family member or friend. That is why we launched the Canadian Employers for Caregivers Plan to engage with employers to find ways to better support employees who are balancing work and care responsibilities,” stated the Honourable Alice Wong, Minister of State (Seniors). “Economic Action Plan 2015 reaffirms our government’s commitment to supporting Canadian families through such measures as the Family Tax Cut and expanding the Universal Child Care Benefit, as well as extending the duration of Employment Insurance Compassionate Care Benefits from six weeks to six months.”

The number of and demands on family caregivers in Canada will continue to grow as our population ages and our health systems become more dependent upon unpaid care. “In using powerful visual narratives, our intent is to cut through the busy noise and information to capture the public’s attention. In doing so, we hope to stimulate a deeper engagement that will lead to the profound change we need as a nation,” said Nadine Henningsen, President, Canadian Caregiver Coalition. “The CCC believes it is critical to build a better understanding of the impact family caregiving has on our society, and to make sure our parliamentarians understand the importance of the issue and their role in providing solutions.”

“I am proud that our organization has been invited to participate in this exciting photographic census, which profiles Canadians who share their personal stories of how they balance and juggle the demands of their working and personal life. We are honoured and humbled to be recognized as a caregiver-friendly employer. Our vision is to provide outstanding care to every person, every day, and we do that by providing a supportive work environment for our employees who are balancing paid work and informal care,” said Jutta Schafler Argao, Vice President of People, Quality and Planning, Mississauga Halton CCAC.

The CCC and CCS believe the federal government has a critical role to play in supporting the health and well-being of family caregivers. “The expansion of the Compassionate Care benefit is an important step in

the right direction and we will continue to advocate for improved financial support for family caregivers, and for affordable, high-quality palliative care” said Christine Williams, Vice President, Research and Policy, Canadian Cancer Society.

The CCC and CCS recognize the actions that have been taken over the past few years to support family caregivers, but more must be done. Across the country, caregivers are calling for acknowledgement and assistance. Formal recognition of and respect for the valuable role of family caregivers in ensuring the sustainability of our health care system, and the continuing prosperity of our country, is a priority for all Canadians. We are calling on all elected officials and federal political parties include actions to increase awareness of and support for family caregivers in their upcoming election platforms. Parties should craft ideas to:

1. Raise awareness of the role and value for family caregivers by championing an awareness campaign lead with a Prime Ministerial proclamation on National Caregiver Day.
2. Safeguard the health and well-being of family caregivers through targeted funding to support a caregiver respite programs and other community-based services.
3. Minimize the financial burden placed on family caregivers by improving job security, income replacement, and tax deduction policies.
4. Support caregivers’ access to information and resources by developing a national resource database that links with current jurisdictional initiatives.
5. Assist employers to provide supportive workplaces that recognize and respect caregivers’ needs by funding an Employers for Carers consortium to equip employers with information, tools and resources.

All of us (government, stakeholders and individuals) need to work together to ensure family caregivers have equal opportunities they are entitled to in living a productive life with dignity and respect. Together, we can create a support system for caregivers that is reliable, effective and sustainable. Together, we can achieve our vision of a country that recognizes, respects and supports the integral role of family caregivers in society.

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About the Canadian Caregiver Coalition

Established in 2000, the Canadian Caregiver Coalition (CCC) is a virtual alliance of diverse partner organizations that work collectively, and autonomously, to identify and respond to the needs of caregivers in Canada. Our mission is to enhance the quality of life for family caregivers through advocacy and synergistic partnerships. Together we strive to achieve our vision of “a Canada that recognizes, respects, and values the integral role of family caregivers in society”. For more information, visit www.ccc-ccan.ca.

About the Canadian Cancer Society

The Canadian Cancer Society is a national community-based organization of volunteers whose mission is the eradication of cancer and the enhancement of the quality of life of people living with cancer. When you want to know more about cancer, visit our website www.cancer.ca or call our toll-free, bilingual Cancer Information Service at 1 888 939-3333.

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