



Using policy to support caregivers in the workplace: An example from Ontario, Canada

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Ontario Caregiver Coalition (OCC)



- Founded in 2009
- 40+ organizational members (charities, Non-profits)
- 20 individual caregivers
- Caregiver Advisory Group guides work
- 3 Sub-committees, Steering Committee
- Affiliated with the Canadian Caregiver Coalition

The Language We Use



- In Canada many terms are used
 - Caregiver
 - Carer
 - Care partner
- OCC distinguishes between paid and unpaid caregivers, rather than formal and informal

Caregivers in Canada



- Population of 32 million; 8 million are caregivers (6.1mil employed)
- 43 % reduced their work hours because of caregiving responsibilities
- 40% of Canada's population lives in Ontario

Source: Canadian Caregiver Coalition 2014 – Caregiver Strategy Policy recommendation paper

Canadian Parliamentary System



- Federalism – 2 levels of government
 - Federal government
 - Provincial Government (Employment Standards Act)
- Lobbying based on responsibilities of level of government

Ontario Politics



- Majority governments – can do what they like (as long as the public doesn't get irate)
- Minority governments – must work with another party to win vote. More compromise.
- This matters when lobbying for change – who to target.

Overview



- Minister of Labour introduces Bill 21 – Caregiver Leave
- Existing legislation protected leave for caregivers of someone who was 26 weeks from death.
- Minority government, but all party support, so should pass easily, right?
- Delays:
 - Scandals
 - Political jockeying
 - Election threat

Overcoming political Obstacles



- Leveraging other coalitions
 - Heart&Stroke Foundation, Canadian Cancer Society support
- Be present – show your face

The Result



- On April 25, 2014 Bill 21 – Leaves to Help Families (an amendment to the Employment Standards Act) received royal assent. Came into affect Oct 1, 2014
- Caregivers in Ontario could receive:
 - Up to 8 weeks job-protected leave to care a family member with a serious medical condition
 - Up to 37 weeks of job-protected leave to care for a critically ill child
 - Up to 52 weeks of job-protected leave for employees who are parents of a child who has disappeared as a result of a possible crime
 - Up to 104 weeks of job-protected leave for employees who are parents of a child who has died as a result of a possible crime

The “Wins”



- As part of OCC lobbying, we achieved the following amendments:
 - Expansion of ‘serious medical condition’ to include episodic and progressive conditions
 - Ability to receive documentation from regulated health professionals, bypassing the physician fee
 - Taking the leave in days, not weeks

Not done yet



- It's not perfect, but it's a start.
 - Job-protection, no money attached... yet
- Existing federal Employment Insurance (EI) benefits include compassionate care benefits.
 - Next up → EI support

Summary



- Know what you want
- Know your government system
- Know your obstacles
- Know your allies and use them
- Be relentless, respectful and work within your given political system

Dedication



- This presentation, and my commitment to advocating the passage of Bill 21 is dedicated to my colleague Ms. Helena Adler.
- Helena was a strong caregiver advocate who pushed hard for Bill 21 until cancer took her from us in May 2014.
- Helena cared for her mother with dementia, to the detriment of her career and her health. She asked me to use her story as inspiration.

Thank you



- If you'd like more information please contact me at:

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