



Working caregivers: juggling multiple roles

by Josie Padro

According to the University of Alberta's Research on Ageing Policies and Practice (RAPP) there are 2.3 million employed caregivers in Canada. One-third of employed women and one quarter of employed men over the age of 45 provide some form of assistance to a family member or friend who has an illness or disability.

Looking at data from Statistics Canada's 2007 General Social Survey on Family Social Support and Retirement, RAPP discovered some interesting facts:

- The majority of employed caregivers ranged in age between 45 and 54, were married and had post-secondary educations.
- One in six caregivers had children under 15 years old.
- Forty percent of caregivers care for more than one person.
- Most employed caregivers were caring for their parents, however one in five cared for someone who was not a family member.
- On average, employed caregivers spent the equivalent of a full workday on caregiving tasks
- Many employed caregivers reduced their work hours so they could provide care.

A 2009 report titled *Balancing Paid Work and Caregiving Responsibilities: A Closer Look at Family Caregivers in Canada* found that the most stressful element for employed caregivers is not necessarily providing physical care. Providing emotional support and coordinating care was what caregivers reported as most stressful.

"This suggests," conclude the authors, "that the stresses associated with employed caregiving are not simply a function of the amount of time spent in the role but instead are related to the amount of control one has over the role." RAPP has called for public and workplace policies that will help caregivers accommodate paid work with caregiving responsibilities. Employed caregivers suggested they could benefit from more community resources including respite and transportation options. They suggested establishing a

central agency through which they could make all care arrangements.
They also called for government employment policies that allow greater flexibility at work and that provide for longer periods of time off work.