

EVALUATING CANADA'S COMPASSIONATE CARE BENEFIT FROM THE
EMPLOYER/HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) PERSPECTIVE

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EMPLOYER/HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) PERSPECTIVE

By

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Abstract

Canada's rising aging population in addition to the de-institutionalization of palliative care services to the community-level has placed increased pressure on employed family members to provide care. Canada's federal government has responded through the creation of the Compassionate Care Benefit (CCB), enacted in 2004 with the goal of providing family caregivers with job-secured time away from work as well as six weeks of employment insurance (EI) benefits of up to 55% of their average earnings while they take leave to provide care to a dying loved one. Individual workplaces have been aware for years of the need to accommodate their employees' family needs through the adoption of Family Friendly Work Policies (FFWPs). Traditionally, these policies have been associated with assisting female employees with maternity and childcare supports. With the rising elderly population and emphasis on family caregiving, more workers will have the dual role of being a worker and a caregiver to a loved one, which suggests that workforces need to be prepared by offering suitable supports to accommodate their workforces who are also terminal caregivers. The objectives of this thesis are twofold. First, it attempts to uncover the expectations and realities that employers and HR professionals had of the CCB, specific to how it meets their employees' needs, how it meets the informational needs of the workplace, and its ability to be incorporated within existing features. The second objective specifically focuses on palliative or end-of-life (P/EoL) caregiving situations in the workplace through addressing how workplace size and employee characteristics determine how 'family caregiver friendly' a given

workplace can be. Five focus group discussions occurred in British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador with employers/human resources (HR) professionals in an effort to gain input from diverse employers representing various workplace sizes and sectors. All focus groups were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim and thematically analyzed.

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Preface

This Master's thesis is comprised of two research papers which have been prepared for academic journal submissions.

Chapter Two:

Vuksan, M., Williams, A., Crooks, V.A. Employer and Human Resources Professionals' Expectations and Experienced Realities of Canada's Compassionate Care Benefit. Submitted to *Canadian Public Policy*.

Chapter Three:

Vuksan, M., Williams, A., Crooks, V.A. Family Caregiver Friendly Workplaces and End of Life Caregiving Requests: Examining Workplace Size and Employee Characteristics. Submitted to *Work, Employment and Society*.

Both papers are co-authored with Dr. Allison Williams (the Master's supervisor) and Dr. Valorie Crooks. Both Dr. Crooks and Dr. Williams are lead investigators on the large-scale CCB Evaluation Research Project, and thus, provided guidance on the direction of this research. The examination of the CCB from the employer/HR personnel's perspective is one component of the large-scale evaluation. It should be noted that all three co-authors collaborated together about what the broad research topics should be for both papers. The first author was solely responsible for the research data collection, the data analysis, interpretation of findings, reviewing the literature, and writing the papers. The second and third authors' offered editorial advice in addition to critically reviewing both papers in preparation for submission.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Context

Geographers have been discussing the impacts of government cutbacks with respect to health care restructuring and reduced health care services (Milligan, 2000; Dyck et al. 2005). Within the realm of health geography, there has been increased emphasis on studying the burden that health-care restructuring, specifically the move from institutional to community care has placed on family caregivers (Wiles, 2003). In Canada, this is visible through the shift to home-based care and the rising elderly population, which has escalated the importance of family caregiving in the home (Health Canada, 2007). It is estimated that 4-5 million Canadians are currently providing care to a loved one with a disability, a long-term chronic illness or in a palliative state (Canadian Caregiver Coalition, 2009). This is analogous to what is expressed via the geographic caregiving literature, being that women, disproportionately have a greater likelihood of providing such care (Milligan, 2000; Wiles 2003; Dyck, 2005). The majority of these caregivers are employed women between the ages of 45-64 (Cranswick and Dosman, 2008). Employment, as Wiles (2003) highlights, is one of the many social factors which needs to be dissected and understood in order to effectively frame an individual's care experience.

1.1.1 Palliative Care

Palliative or end-of-life care (P/EoL) entails care at end of life, providing physical symptom management, alleviation of pain, and social/emotional and bereavement support for their caregivers (Health Canada, 2009). The goal of this type of care is to ensure that the dying individual has the highest quality of life possible until they pass away (Crooks and Williams, 2008). P/EoL care can be provided across a diverse range of settings, including hospitals, long-term care facilities, hospices or in the home. However, the majority of people at this stage express the desire to remain in their homes to die (Knops et al., 2005). For the families of the dying, home deaths are also positive; families are better able to cope with the death when it has occurred at home than they would if the death occurred in a traditional medical setting (Weibull et al., 2008). In these situations, interdisciplinary palliative care teams would ideally come into the home to provide the specified medical, psychological, spiritual and emotional care required (Weibull et al., 2008).

1.1.2 Caregiving and Employment

Of the 4-5 million caregivers in this country, approximately 70% are employed (Duxbury et al., 2009). They try and balance both sets of responsibilities on a daily basis, which can have negative implications. As Swanberg (2006) suggests, family caregivers are already at risk for physical, psychological and financial implications as a result of their caregiver role; when the caregiver is also employed (as the majority are in Canada),

these stresses are intensified. There is a growing realization that workplaces need to accommodate the work-life balance of their employees, as the numbers of employees needing to provide P/EoL care in the future is expected to increase (Lero, 2007). Swanberg (2006) found that workplaces which have supports in place decrease employee hardship and can assist employees in meeting their caregiving responsibilities.

Clearly of relevance to the field of labour geography are matters affecting employees, employers and workplaces in general (Castree, 2007). With increasing numbers of employees needing time off of work to provide care, the provision of caregiver-supports not only impacts individual employees but their workplaces as well. Such supports are often referred to as “family friendly policies,” (Hegtvedt et al., 2002; Healy, 2004; Callan, 2007), ‘friendly responsive policies’ (Glass and Estes, 1997) or ‘workplace policies’ (Pavalko and Henderson, 2006). All of these terms reflect workplace arrangements encompassing both formal and informal features designed to meet the needs of employees with various family responsibilities (Callan, 2007). For instance, informal features can encompass flexibility in scheduling and employer discretion in granting days off, while formal features refer to specific company policies around palliative care leaves. Despite progress with respect to adopting family friendly workplace policies (FFWPs), such supports are predominantly focused on addressing the earlier stages of the life cycle in the form of maternity and parental policies (Koerin et al., 2008) with minimal emphasis on adult dependents, elderly care or P/EoL care specifically (McKee et al., 2000).

1.1.3 Government Response

The need to provide provisions to support employed caregivers was recognized in 2004 by Canada's Liberal government, through the development of Canada's Compassionate Care Benefit (CCB). It was instituted at a time of government surplus (Evans, 2007), reflected in the government extension of the length of parental benefits in 2001. Specifically, the CCB is a mechanism designed to provide employees with temporary leave from their jobs to care for a loved one at risk of death within 26 weeks, determined through a physician's certificate providing they have worked 600 insurable hours. The CCB is available not only to family of the dying individual, but can be utilized by anyone whom is deemed 'as close as family'. The recipient can travel out of province or internationally to provide the compassionate care this leave allows. The weeks can be split up among families and users can also choose to stagger the weeks they take it. Specifically, eligible applicants receive a 6 week job-secured leave from work and 55% of their income over that period (Service Canada, 2009). The benefit component, which entitles claimants to income reimbursement, is administered through the Employment Insurance (EI) program, through Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) thus, applying for CCB is the same as with other EI programs (Maternity Leave Benefit, Disability, Unemployment, etc.). The CCB, as with all Federal EI benefit programs are available to all employees regardless of whether they are employed publically or privately; any person paying into the EI scheme can be offered compassionate relief through this program. There is a two-week unpaid waiting period

their employee applicants is discussed. How well the CCB meets workplaces' informational needs will also be presented as will its ability to be incorporated within existing workplace features.

2. To examine how workplace size serves as a barrier or facilitator to employees taking P/EoL leave. This will be achieved by discussing which FFWPs are most prevalent in small and larger companies; including policies specific to flexibility, human resources infrastructure, replacement staff and unionization.

3. To understand how the employee characteristics influence their requests for P/EoL caregiving leave in the workplace. Specifically addressing length of time with employer, skill level and full-time or part-time status.

1.3 Thesis Contributions

This section provides an overview of the thesis contributions to the policy and research realms.

1.3.1 Policy Contributions

The most valuable potential contribution of this research is to inform actual Canadian policy, specific to the ways in which the CCB could be improved to best meet the needs of its applicants/users and the workplaces in which they are employed. This

contribution will be ever-more pertinent in upcoming years with the expected growth of the elderly population, prompting many more families to provide informal P/EoL care.

1.3.2 Research Contributions

Much of the existing research on FFWPs has been centered on reproductive issues (Bernard and Philips, 2007; Koerin et al., 2008), and has failed to address the increasing demands placed on working aged people to care for dying relatives (McKee et al., 2000). This thesis contributes to the dearth of literature on end-of-life caregiving issues in the workplace.

Within the realm of geography, this thesis work can contribute both to the field of health geography and labour geography. To begin, the health geography literature pertaining to caregiving reinforces the need to understand an individual's role as a caregiver and as an employee (Clemmer et al., 2008) if their caregiving experience is to be more fully understood. In a similar light, labour geographers strive to learn more about their employees which necessitates an awareness of their unique social/familial concerns (Lier, 2007).

1.4 Chapter Outline

This thesis is organized into four chapters. This chapter, the Introduction has served to provide a contextual understanding of the growing need to support employees who must take time from the workplace in order to care for a dying loved one. Moreover,

a brief introduction to how workplaces have responded to this need through the institution of FFWPs has been presented, as has the federal government's response in instituting the CCB. Additionally, the research objectives as well as the contributions of this thesis research have been presented.

Chapter 2 consists of a research study centered on employers/HR professionals' expectations of the CCB and their experienced realities of having it utilized in their workplaces. The specific expectations relate to (a) the Benefit's ability to meet the needs of their employees, (b) meeting their company's informational needs, as well as (c) the Benefit's ability to be incorporated within existing workplace features. This research paper was prepared for submission to the journal *Canadian Public Policy*.

Chapter 3 consists of a research study examining how requests for P/EoL caregiving leave are managed with respect to the size of company and the characteristics of the employee requesting the leave. Specifically, the extent to which workplaces are Family Caregiver Friendly can be determined through: the examination of a workplace's degree of flexibility, the availability of HR departments, availability of replacement staff, and the degree of unionization. With respect to employee characteristics, the likelihood of being accommodated for a P/EoL caregiving request is impacted by: their length of time with the workplace, skill level and full-time or part-time status. This research paper was prepared for submission to the journal *Work, Employment and Society*.

Chapter 4, the concluding chapter offers a summary of the major findings of Chapters 2 and 3 and discusses limitations to the research. The research contributions of

the thesis are then presented, as are the final conclusions and implications for future research.

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CHAPTER TWO

Employer and Human Resource Professionals' Expectations and Experienced Realities of Canada's Compassionate Care Benefit

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2.1 Abstract

This research aims to uncover the expectations that Canadian employers and human resources (HR) professionals have of the Compassionate Care Benefit (CCB) in addition to their experienced realities of having staff utilize this social program. The federally-regulated CCB provides family caregivers with job-secured time away from work as well as six weeks of employment insurance (EI) benefits while they take leave to provide care to a dying family member or close other. Applicants have the potential to receive up to 55% of their average earnings over the six week period. The perspectives of employer/HR professionals were sought out because they are key stakeholders of the CCB, as they represent thousands of employees' across the country. Using thematic analysis, the data uncovered how well the CCB (1) meets applicants' needs, (2) meets the informational needs of workplaces and (3) can be integrated within existing company features. Five focused discussions were implemented with employers/HR across Canada in an effort to get input from diverse employers representing various workplace sizes and sectors.

Key Words: Compassionate Care Benefit, palliative care, program expectations, stakeholder perspectives

2.2 Introduction

Palliative or end-of-life (P/EoL) care entails the care provided to individuals at end of life; it includes physical symptom management, alleviation of pain, social/emotional support, as well as caregiver and bereavement support (Health Canada, 2009). The aging population in Canada, together with the shift to home-based P/EoL care at the end-stages has escalated the importance of family caregiving in the home (Health Canada, 2007). This trend is also coupled with the fact that patients express the desire to remain in their homes to die (Knops et al., 2005), thus increasing the importance of having care available in people's homes. In order to ensure that people can remain in their homes to die, the support of informal family caregiver(s) is crucial (Cain et al., 2004). Currently, it is estimated that between 4 and 5 million Canadians are providing care for a loved one with a disability, a long-term chronic illness or designated as palliative; the value of their unpaid care work has saved the health care system approximately CDN \$5 Billion in paid labour costs (Canadian Caregiver Coalition, 2009). The majority of these caregivers are employed women between the ages of 45 and 64 (Cranswick and Dosman, 2008). Generally, caregivers are at an increased risk for physical, psychological and financial stress, as a result of carrying out both caregiving and paid employment (Swanberg, 2006). This dual role often leads to difficulties concentrating while on the job (Swanberg, 2006) and can lead to significant time off from work, including using up vacation time or being forced into early retirement, the latter of which can have drastic economic implications (Cain et al., 2004).

In 2001, there were 492,000 Canadians over the age of 65; the CCB will be even more pertinent due to the projected increase of this population to over 2.5 million in 2056 (Statistics Canada, 2006). Such statistics clearly demonstrate the rapidly increasing demand for P/EoL care, including that given by family members, in the Canadian context. As a result, more people will have the dual role of being a caregiver-worker (Clemmer et al., 2008; Lero, 2007). From the perspective of both government and employees, there is a growing realization that employers need to accommodate the issue of work-life balance for their caregiver-workers, as the numbers of employees needing to provide P/EoL care in the future is expected to only increase (Lero, 2007). While some companies have proceeded to develop their own solutions to this demand in the form of family friendly workplace policies (Callan, 2007), the Canadian government also has taken the initiative to develop a program intended to support family caregivers in the workplace named the Compassionate Care Benefit (CCB).

The CCB was enacted in 2004 by Canada's Federal Government; the primary goal of this program is to provide eligible workers with job-secured time away from work as well as six weeks of Employment Insurance (EI) benefits while they take leave to provide care to a gravely ill or dying family member or someone they are closed to. This care can be hands-on (e.g., wound care, toileting) or hands-off (e.g., emotional care, care coordination) and can take place in or across settings such as the home, hospital or hospice. Specifically, eligible applicants can receive up to 55% of their average earnings to a maximum of CDN\$447.00 over the six week benefit period (Service Canada, 2009).

The care must be for a dying person expected to pass away within a 26 week timeframe; this requirement is determined via a physician's medical certificate. Any person who has made adequate contributions into the EI scheme, namely having worked 600 insurable hours, can take up the CCB as long as they meet the program's eligibility criteria noted here. There is a two-week unpaid waiting period with the CCB (as with all EI programs) before applicants can receive any financial benefits. The six week CCB leave can be split among family members and recipients can choose to alternate the weeks they take the Benefit, if desired (Service Canada, 2009).

The CCB program responds to the pressing need to support Canadian caregiver-workers. However, this program is not well known and is also underutilized as a result (Giesbrecht et al., 2009). The underutilization of such a valuable and needed resource for caregivers and workplaces alike has prompted us to investigate the possible reasons for its poor uptake. Herein we examine the CCB program from the perspective of Canadian employers and human resource (HR) professionals as part of a larger evaluative study intended to identify how to improve the Benefit so that it better serves the needs of intended users. This work has involved consultation with three key stakeholder groups: (1) family caregivers, (2) front-line P/EoL providers, and (3) employers/HR professionals. According to Riege and Lindsay (2006), the input of multiple stakeholders, each of whom have varying ideas of what makes a policy/program ideal, is necessary in order to effectuate policy change. In examining this third dataset, which is comprised of five focus group discussions with employers/HR professionals across Canada, it became

clear that these stakeholders had quite clear and consistent expectations of how the CCB program should operate. Articulating stakeholder values, manifest here as expectations, is important to policy analysis as it ensures 'active involvement of those responsible for actual implementation' (Wharf & McKenzie, 1998, p.66). Given this, in the present paper we explore these very expectations, including in relation to whether or not the CCB meets employees' needs and the needs of workplaces, and also pair them with the experienced realities reported by the focus group participants. We first provide details of the study design before presenting the analytical results, after which the discussion and conclusions follow.

2.3 Methods

The overall study methodology is guided by Patton's (2000) utilization focused evaluation process, which emphasizes gathering key stakeholders' perspectives in order to be able to efficiently evaluate a given program or policy, which in this case is the CCB. Five focus group discussions occurred across Canada in five targeted provinces (British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador) in the summer and fall of 2008. Focus groups allow for the collection of rich data from participants with key similarities by sparking dynamic discussion (Creswell, 2007), which is why they were selected as the data collection method. The sample was comprised of employers and HR professionals representing various workplace sizes and sectors, including manufacturing, utilities, service, health and government. To identify

such individuals the Canadian Council of Human Resources Professionals (CCHRP) provincial satellite offices were first contacted in an effort to recruit through their membership. Next, online membership lists of local Chambers of Commerce and Better Business Bureaus and phone directories for each province were consulted to find contact information for a range of employers. The process of sending study information and invitations to potential participants followed. A few cases of snowball sampling also occurred (i.e., participants sharing study information with others), while the majority was purposeful in order to explicitly have workplace-type diversity among the participants. These recruitment efforts led to a total of 27 individuals taking part in the five focus groups held.

The focus group guide consisted of 14 open-ended questions that examined: participants' knowledge of the CCB and other secured leaves; experienced and expected difficulties in implementing the CCB and other secured leaves and thoughts on CCB improvement. Because the majority of the participants expressed having little to no knowledge about the CCB, an information sheet about the program was circulated in advance of data collection. Prior to starting the discussions, participants reviewed study information, including details of their rights as participants, and signed consent forms. Before the formal questions began, each participant also completed a questionnaire which characterized his/her workplace and employment position. Data were collected over a five-month period (from July 2008 to November 2008). There was a high degree of consistency in the steps that were followed in the data collection process across focus

groups. For example, the same person that was in charge of recruiting for, organizing and moderating the focus groups also analyzed the data. Another consistent element was that all groups were held in major urban centres in the five provinces of focus. Such consistency was intended to contribute to the rigour of the findings.

Each focus group discussion lasted roughly 1.5 hours and was digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Upon completion of all focus groups, verbatim transcriptions were prepared and manually coded so as to identify the main emergent themes and sub-themes, which were organized around the 14 questions on the guide. After each transcript was independently coded thematically (Boyatzis, 1998), the five groups of codes were combined into one central codebook. The process of organizing the codes (consisting of major themes and sub-themes) followed; at this point similar codes found across groups were combined, and frequently occurring codes were noted as were the less common codes. A few stages of code organization followed, where the code list became more concise and reflective of only the most significant themes and sub-themes apparent in the data. The study collaborators regularly assembled to discuss the coding process and came to an agreement over what was to be included in the final codebook. Generally, the development of codes was data-driven, meaning that the codes formulated closely resemble the raw data in name and characterization. Boyatzis (1998) suggests that a more data-driven approach, as was employed here, increases validity and allows for easier code interpretation by others who were not involved with code formulation. Regular discussions among the research team and with study collaborators, in the form of

teleconferences and face-to-face meetings, throughout the data collection and analysis processes led to a high degree of consistency in the interpretation of the findings central to this analysis.

2.4 Findings

As noted above, this paper strives to uncover the expectations that Canadian employers/HR professionals have of the CCB, along with the realities of administering this program and of having an employee from the workplace use the Benefit. To begin, the degree to which the program meets the needs of employee applicants is discussed. Next, the degree to which the CCB meets the informational needs of workplaces is showcased. Finally, we move to consider the Benefit's ability to be incorporated within existing workplace features. For each of these three analytic components, the expectation that employers/HR professionals have of the Benefit is outlined as well as the experienced realities of the CCB program.

2.4.1 Applicant Needs

Based on the employer/HR viewpoint, the data provides insight into how the CCB program can best meet staff's needs, taking their multiple roles as caregivers, employees, and EI contributors into consideration. These insights are summarized in Table 2.1 and expanded upon in the remainder of the subsection.

Table 2.1 – The Ability of the CCB to Meet Applicants' Needs

	Expectation	Reality	Outcome
As Caregivers	To ensure that workers can spend as much time as possible with loved one during last days of life without the worry of finances or work responsibilities.	The CCB has a slow processing time, a 2 week unpaid waiting period, and a short 6 week benefit period; is it also not useful for multiple family members as the weeks must be shared.	<i>CCB does not meet applicants' needs</i>
As Employees	To ensure that workers have job security and steady income while away on leave.	CCB ensures job security and limited income (up to 55% wages) during the 6 week leave period to a maximum of CDN \$447 per week.	<i>CCB does not meet applicants' needs</i>
As EI Contributors	To ensure that workers who have contributed to EI can gain access to the program. Also to ensure that contributors are getting the most paid weeks off for the amount of insurable hours worked.	To be eligible for CCB (6 week benefit at 55% income), applicants must have proof of 600 hours. However, for some other EI programs, 600 hours affords the applicant with 24 weeks.	<i>CCB does not meet applicants' needs</i>

2.4.1.1 As Caregivers

The central expectation study participants had for their staff, considering their role as caregivers, was that the CCB would afford them as much time possible with the dying person, together with family during their last days without the anxiety of financial concerns or work responsibilities. In reality, however, the time it takes to process applications, in addition to the fact that the CCB could possibly be shared among family members, is limiting in achieving this:

I've heard they [applicants] can take up to four weeks to potentially get a response...that is problematic for employees because you are waiting you are

dealing with the stress and now you are waiting. Like will I work, am I covered or am I not covered, I know I've got the time but am I going to get the Benefit...?

You only get six weeks total split between however many people, I think that's utterly ridiculous...if one was to take the one week off, they would lose a week's pay...the first person has to sacrifice the two week waiting period...there's no point splitting this [the CCB], it's only for six weeks, what's the point, it's only more of a financial burden.

Another expectation that participants held of the CCB for their caregiver-workers was that the Benefit would allow for time off after the death for the funeral, completing estate arrangements as well as to grieve before being required to go back to work. In actuality, even if the care recipient passes during the six-week period of coverage, the person must go back to work, which leaves little time to grieve. Or, alternatively, the caregiver-worker must draw on sick leave time or bereavement leave time, should this be available. The fact, that the Benefit ends on the day of the person's passing was viewed as quite harsh: *'Well if you've been sitting at the hospital 12 hours a day for six weeks, you don't need that benefit to be over, when the person dies you are exhausted.'* The grieving process is a normal part of dying; the length and intensity varies with individuals (Callahan, 2009). However, when an employee prematurely returns to the workplace while they are still grieving, it can have negative implications on their work and mental state (Bento, 1994). Bento (1994) contends that workplaces have incurred billions of dollars in cost as a result of reduced workforce productivity resulting from grief. It is thus

not surprising that the participants flagged this issue (i.e., the coverage of a bereavement period) as an expectation of the CCB program.

When the participants reflected on their employees' roles as caregivers and the expectations they held for the CCB in this regard, it was clear that the program did not meet what they viewed to be applicants' needs. Possible suggestions to improve the program and thus meet these particular anticipated needs included: speeding up the application processing time, eliminating the two-week waiting period, allowing multiple family members to each take six weeks of leave (rather than allowing six weeks in total to go towards each dying person), providing an automatic brief bereavement leave after death, and allowing people who have not maxed out the leave time to use some of the remaining time for bereavement.

2.4.1.2 *As Employees*

Having job security and consistent income are extremely valuable to employees. Participants made it clear that these values would remain unchanged when a workplace leave such as the CCB is taken by an employee. The CCB guarantees job security over the leave period, which thus demonstrates its responsiveness to the value of job security. As some participants pointed out, having job security enforced through the Benefit is more important to some kinds of workers than others:

My sister works for a tile company, doesn't make a lot of money, they don't pay a lot of benefits. So if something happened to our mother and she had to come home

or whatever that Benefit [the CCB] would truly come into play for her, because otherwise I would see them terminating her...those jobs are not as secure as someone who requires high level employees.

As is illustrated in this quote, those employed in more precarious or replaceable positions very much need the job security afforded by the caregiving period in order to maintain their roles as workers after having provided care.

Regarding the value of having a steady income, while the CCB ensures applicants a reduced, yet steady income (up to 55% of total earnings) while on leave, the low maximum amount of \$447 a week acts as a disincentive for many to apply. Moreover, the mandatory two-week unpaid waiting period forces people to endure a significant period of time without any income:

What's the purpose of a two-week waiting period? I mean I need the money for the first two weeks as well as I need it for the last six right?.... in this situation that two weeks could make or break a person financially because you know, you've got blue collar workers that live paycheck to paycheck, you know, \$100 prescription for their child could put them in the red. And they have to now incur a two-week period?

Thus, from the perspective of employers and HR professionals, the CCB fails to meet applicants' full needs as income-earning workers. Future improvements could thus include eliminating the unpaid waiting period.

2.4.1.3 *As EI Contributors*

Recent Canadian research on palliative caregivers' multiple roles has raised issues pertaining to their roles as 'caregiver' and 'employee' (e.g., Clemmer et al. 2008), yet little consideration has been given to their roles as 'EI contributors.' The focus group participants, however, were well aware of this role given their positioning in the workplace. In view of applicants' roles as contributors to the EI program, the main expectation was centered on the priority of getting the most paid weeks off for the amount of hours worked. In order to be eligible for six weeks of the CCB, a claimant must have proof of working 600 insurable hours within the 52-week timeframe before filing the claim (Service Canada, 2009). However, for some other EI programs, such as maternity/paternity and adoption leave, 600 insurable hours of contributions provides them with a longer leave from work, as one participant explained:

You should have the entitlement to 24 weeks in EI. So the worst that has happened to you is that you've taken six weeks compassionate leave, you should still have the remainder left to take EI ... it's your insurance payments that you're making, you're not getting your full benefit that you're paying for.

Participants deemed it unfair, if not even unjust, for some EI programs to have longer leaves than others given that they are all based on the same number of insurable hours of contribution to the system.

To conclude, from the perspective of employers and HR professionals, the CCB does not meet applicants' needs as EI contributors. A possible way to remedy this situation would be to extend the length of the CCB to however many weeks an individual applicant would be eligible for to receive regular EI Benefits¹. There are likely other ways to address meeting this expectation. The point to be made here is that participants thought that their caregiver-employees should be eligible for as many weeks of EI CCB as they would with regular EI benefits.

2.4.2 Workplace Informational Needs

Focus group participants explored how well the CCB meets the needs of the workplace, and particularly regarding having access to program information. More specifically, a significant line of discussion had to do with Benefit comprehension and interpretation to staff. The issues relating to this theme are summarized in Table 2.2 and expanded upon in the remainder of the subsection.

¹ To clarify, regular EI Benefits are based on the number of hours worked within the 52-week timeframe before the claim and are designed to support individuals who have lost their job at no fault of their own or who are looking for employment but unable to secure a position. Regular EI benefits range from 19 to 50 weeks in length (19-week leave corresponding to 420-454 hours of work within the previous 52 weeks to the 50-week leave corresponding to 1820 hours worked within the past 52 week timeframe). There are regional variations across Canada as to how many weeks one is eligible to receive with respect to the amount of hours worked.

Table 2.2 - The Ability of the CCB to Meet Workplaces' Informational Needs

	Expectation	Reality	Outcome
Benefit Comprehension	To ensure a simple understanding of the CCB administration process.	Comprehension of the CCB is unclear; it was found to have complex presentation with too many pages.	<i>CCB does not meet employers' needs</i>
Interpretation to Staff	To ensure a comfortable enough understanding of the CCB in order to effectively educate staff about the Benefit and walk them through the application process.	Employers usually first learn about the CCB when approached by an employee inquiring about the program; employers are unsure of how to interpret it to staff.	<i>CCB does not meet employers' needs</i>

2.4.2.1 *Benefit Comprehension*

An informational expectation employers/HR professionals' had of the CCB relates to how well the complexities of the program can be grasped. These professionals advocated for having a clear understanding of the administration process, achieved through a concise easy-to-follow document. In reality, the sheer number of details of the CCB, together with what was described as 'ambiguous wording', as found online, was thought to be overwhelming for both employers and HR personnel to comprehend. This is severely limiting, being that this group needs to be able to educate workers about the CCB:

I think there is too much information; I guess this thing is 10 pages long and then it says keep clicking to get more information, way too much information...I didn't read through it very carefully because of the volume of text that was there.

The participants are not alone in their concerns regarding the CCB in that Burroughs (2009) has found that professionals are generally challenged when faced with the daunting task of dissecting government information and distributing it to others. Such documents need to be simplified to allow for easier comprehension.

In reality, the CCB was unable to meet employers/HR professionals' informational needs around Benefit comprehension. Participants advocate for a short summary document to be made available to workplace professionals outlining on the main features of the Benefit.

2.4.2.2 Interpretation to Staff

Participants made it clear that they expected to have a comfortable enough understanding of the CCB in order to effectively educate staff about it and assist them with the application process. However, the reality was that many participants learned only of the CCB when prompted to either by being approached by an employee or when preparing for the focus group. They, thus, imagined that their counterparts, namely other employers and HR professionals, would be in the same position: lacking knowledge about the CCB and learning about it only on an as-needs basis. It should be noted that when employers are busy handling multiple responsibilities as is the case generally in

smaller workplaces in particular, according to the participants there is less time devoted to educating employees.

Interestingly, the participants frequently expressed that having an understanding of the CCB and having an ability to convey details about it to staff are quite different. Therefore, having an employer who is aware of the CCB may not necessarily mean that s/he will be able to inform employees properly: *'Information is readily available either through HR or the government website; you know, they pretty much cover everything except the interpretation to employees.'* Thus, participants not only expressed information about the program that was easy to understand for themselves and their positions (e.g., as an employer who must approve a leave) but also that summarizes the program in a way that is easily communicated with employees.

Discussion in the focus groups has revealed that in reality, the CCB does not meet any of the informational needs of workplaces specific staff members, namely employers and HR professionals. To remedy this, the participants advocated for changes to how information is translated about the CCB through the Service Canada website. This website was identified by participants as the main source of EI information and thus was viewed as the ideal place to host a more simplified overview of the program. Until this or other changes are made to improve the informational accessibility of the CCB, this program only adds additional work onto employers/HR professionals' schedules.

2.4.3 Ability to be Incorporated within Existing Workplace Features

Employers/HR representatives relayed the importance of having the CCB be easily incorporated within existing workplace features such as operating procedures and workplace benefit programs. The details of this theme are summarized in Table 2.3 and expanded upon in the remainder of the subsection.

Table 2.3 - The Ability of CCB to be Incorporated within Existing Workplace Features

	Expectation	Reality	Outcome
Degree of Integration with Workplace Leave Procedures	Employers expect all staff to go through the same process when requesting P/EoL leave; this ensures consistency in the workplace.	Employees are encouraged to follow a process when they request P/EoL leave; first utilizing banked sick leave or vacation time, they are then encouraged to go on an EI leave (EI Sick or CCB), then onto an unpaid leave of absence. In reality, the CCB merges well into this process.	<i>CCB can be integrated with workplace leave features</i>
Degree of Integration with Existing Benefits	Employers expect employees to not lose out on benefits while they are away on leave.	In reality, CCB users generally suffer no impact on their pension earnings, vacation time or seniority levels.	<i>CCB cannot be integrated with workplace leave features</i>
Degree of Integration with Workplace Productivity Expectations	Employers expect to have no negative repercussions on workplace productivity when a staff member takes the CCB.	In reality, there are interferences with workplace productivity when an employee takes the CCB; workplaces need to find other staff to take on their workload, or replacement workers need to be hired. Also, the fact that employees can split up the 6 weeks can lead to the burden of managing a discontinuous leave.	<i>CCB cannot be integrated with workplace leave features</i>

2.4.3.1 Degree of Integration with Workplace Leave Procedures

Participants expressed that all staff should go through the same process when requesting P/EoL leave. This ensures consistency with respect to process, including with regard to the point at which the CCB program is raised as an option for caregiver-workers. In reality, the CCB merges well with this expectation. Workplace participants reported how their employees were encouraged to follow a particular process with respect to taking time off to provide care. Generally, first, employees were oriented toward using-up any paid banked company sick leave and/or vacation time. Next, employees were encouraged to take an EI leave.² Lastly, employees were presented with the option of taking an unpaid leave of absence. Specifically, participants were happy that the CCB could get staff to get a paid leave before having to go on an unpaid leave of absence. The outcome, in this case, is that the CCB can be integrated well within existing workplace process.

2.4.3.2 Degree of Integration with Existing Benefits

Many workplaces offered company benefits in the form of vacation time or raises in seniority; which increased relative to the number of years employees had worked for a particular employer. In addition, every working Canadian pays into the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) program: the contributions made by an employee, and equal contributions made by their given employer throughout their working career affords them with a

² EI sick leave was commonly promoted before the CCB existed.

pension for retirement or upon permanent disability. On each paycheque, the employees' CPP contributions are immediately deducted (Service Canada, 2009). Participants were well aware of the value these benefits hold for staff and the draw they can have on prospective employees: *'A workforce, they are making choices based on the benefits that are given...it's not always about wages sometimes'*. The focus group participants expected that the CCB would work in harmony with their existing workplace benefit programs and also that staff not lose out on accrued company benefits. In reality, there was concern that when on CCB leave the employee would not be making CPP or EI contributions and thus would be negatively affected by serving as a caregiver-worker in this regard. They would have to make lump sum payments to compensate for this time should they want to have pension contributions during the care period. At the same time, participants noted that CCB users would typically suffer no impact on their workplace vacation time or seniority levels while away.

2.4.3.3 Degree of Integration with Workplace Productivity Expectations

Employers/HR representatives also had expectations about how a CCB leave would be manifested in business practice, in that they wanted it to have minimal impact on workplace function and productivity. For instance, while they expected some repercussions on workplace productivity when administering CCB leave based on prior experiences of administering other EI leaves, the short length of the leave period held implications for the workplace function and productivity unlike these other leaves. First,

with longer leave periods, such as longer EI leaves of 15 weeks or more, replacements are typically hired to fill the gap left by the person on leave: however, in the case of the CCB, the shortness of the leave period and also the ability to break up the leave weeks over time left participants with little certainty as to how they would fill the gap left by this leave in particular. Many participants reported frustration over not knowing what to do with the workload of the person on CCB leave: *'Six weeks [for CCB] is long enough that you don't just want to leave it but it's short enough that it's hard to find anyone to fill in'*. To add to the challenge, CCB users can also split up the leave across time or share it with other family caregivers if they choose, which only adds to the burden of managing a discontinuous leave:

It is problematic where the person chooses to take two weeks and then the time gap and then two weeks and then a time gap. That can be really difficult to replace somebody. It's almost easier to replace them for the full six weeks. Because then the extra load gets on the shoulders of the staff who are left, so that is always a challenge in replacing people, particularly in this market.

Unlike the previous two positive integrations within company features (ability to be incorporated within existing process and not having an impact on company benefits), the CCB was unsuccessful in meeting workplace productivity expectations specifically with respect to managing the workload of the person on leave. There is productivity and process interference when someone actually utilizes the benefit which is why, overall, the CCB cannot be fully incorporated within existing workplace features.

2.5 Discussion

From the perspective of employers and HR professionals, the CCB was clearly unable to meet applicants' full needs as caregivers, employees, and as EI contributors. Possible changes to the program should include speeding up the processing time and eliminating the 2-week unpaid waiting period. Both these changes would ensure that the applicant is notified more quickly with respect to their acceptance, allowing them to begin caregiving sooner rather than later. Unlike with other EI programs, the CCB relates to the terminal state of individuals where time is of the essence; even minor delays in processing applications can prevent people from accessing the Benefit and using it for its intended purpose. Suggestions were also made to amend the CCB in order to allow for multiple family members to take their own CCB leaves, as opposed to having to split one 6-week period up among a number of family caregivers. Currently, sharing family members still need to individually contribute 600 insurable hours regardless of how many weeks they get off work for 55% of their income. Participants suggested that the CCB should also not end on the day of death; individuals need respite both during their loved ones last moments as well as afterwards during the grieving process. In terms of the length of the Benefit, one suggestion would be to increase the length of the CCB to however many weeks the particular employee would be eligible for EI Benefits.

Specific to employers/HR professionals' informational needs, the CCB clearly did not meet any of their needs around benefit comprehension or interpretation to staff.

Interestingly, many of our participants were unaware of the CCB prior to the focus group, which suggests that the CCB has been under-advertised to the key group responsible for promoting the Benefit to employees. A recent study confirms this in addition to describing the disappointment on part of the employees who expect their employers/HR staff to be knowledgeable about the CCB (Giesbrecht et al., 2009). It is not surprising then that they would have difficulty comprehending the Benefit themselves, let alone explain it to their staff or help them through the application process. These next set of suggestions deviate from those aimed at changing the structure of the program, and focus more on the government's role in information dissemination. The federal government needs to be proactive in educating all workplaces across the country; participants advocate for a simple, easy to read document. According to Giesbrecht et al. (2009) front-line workplace professionals, given their demanding schedules, would benefit from a simple document, as it would enable them to access information quickly. It should roughly be one page in length which outlines key features of the program which would be most relevant for workplaces to be aware of. To build on this initial introduction to the CCB, workplace representatives would also like instruction on how to interpret it to their staff and mention an interactive video file on the CCB website with a live person explaining the application process. Additionally, many people call the 1-800 numbers to get through to a live person either at Service Canada or Employment Insurance (EI) departments to get further clarification on CCB application. This process is long and arduous with lengthy waiting times, and is not feasible for employers/HR professionals

with many other responsibilities to contend with. Therefore, it would be extremely useful to designate staff on hand at Service Canada and the EI Department to deal specifically with workplace concerns around the CCB. Earlier published work from the overall evaluative study confirms the pathways discussed here which the government can utilize to improve CCB information-dissemination; re-designing how information about the CCB is presented and assigning specialized EI personnel to handle CCB questions (Crooks et al., 2007).

2.6 Study Limitations

Of the professionals surveyed, HR professionals were most likely to agree to participate based on their familiarity with the CCB, as their job descriptions demand a working knowledge of government employee benefits. Another limitation was that many participants had no administrative experience with the CCB, and answered the questions based on what they had done in similar circumstances (i.e. maternity leaves) or what they expect to encounter should their workplaces experience future CCB leave requests. Another limitation, specific to the first part of the analysis, relating to expectations of CCB meeting the needs of employee applicants is that these views were based on those of the employers, not the actual employees.

2.7 Conclusion and Implications

As per the original goal of this study, this analysis did discuss the initial expectations workplace representatives (employers/HR and staff) had of the CCB program, in addition to the realities experienced while implementing the Benefit in practice. This analysis serves to orient policy makers toward key suggestions that would improve the Benefit and the ways in which the Federal Government can advance its information-dissemination regarding the CCB to workplaces.

These insights may be specific to this particular case, yet there are elements of this analysis that can be extended to other research areas and policy domains. For instance, this analytic piece on the CCB can contribute to the existing literature on information policy research: the issues pertaining to the CCB's inability to meet the needs of its key stakeholders, (thus addressing the issues that were originally intended) are highlighted here, as are the suggested recommendations to improve the CCB policy (McClure and Jaeger, 2008). Bennett (2007) discusses how utilizing 'expectations' in research can be advantageous for identifying gaps in service delivery and evaluating program outcomes. This study also sheds light on the role that key stakeholder values play in policy. For instance, Wharf and McKenzie (1998) believe that policies which fail to incorporate the values of its actual users will not be useful in practice. There will continue to be a disjoint between a program's political goals and its implications in practice until these values (which are manifested as concerns or suggestions) are solicited

by government (Wharf and McKenzie, 1998). In the case of the CCB, this reality should further propel policy makers to implement the changes proposed here in order to ensure that the goal of best accommodating employed P/EoL family caregivers and their workplaces is being achieved. Once implemented, Riege and Lindsay (2006) recommend that consultations between government and stakeholders be ongoing as their concerns are likely to evolve, which means the policy itself would need to evolve. This analysis also brings attention to the apparent faults with the EI program in general. For instance, the fact that people pay into the program for the entire length of their working careers and only be given 6 weeks under the CCB at 55% of their income is considered by the participants as unreasonable. These people are even more disadvantaged when they take the CCB with family members as they must all split the 6 weeks. Although providing recommendations for changing the EI system is overly complex and outside the realm of this paper, this analysis has revealed that clearly, this system is not meeting people's needs, and more work needs to be done to tease out any additional issues to recommend further improvements. For instance, Brown et al. (2008) propose a new model that could replace the traditional Employment Insurance (EI) or Unemployment Insurance (UI), as it is also called throughout the world (both are guided by the same principles and are funded through payroll taxes). The new model advocates for employees to have individual accounts where they make ongoing contributions while employed instead of contributions going into the social system; when people need to take time off of work for

whatever reason, they can use their own funds, whatever they have accumulated (Brown et al., 2008).

In the realm of social policies and programs, the CCB, only instituted in 2004, is relatively young. It is apparent that there are many problems with the Benefit: it is currently unable to meet the multiple needs of employee applicants or the administrative/knowledge-based needs of workplaces. We can be hopeful though, that the CCB can change to better meet society's needs. Like Canada's well-known EI Maternity Leave Benefit which started out at 15 weeks of leave (Calder, 2006)³ then progressed to 50 weeks of leave (Evans, 2006), it is hopeful that the CCB will do the same. It is evident that the current research being conducted on fully-evaluating the CCB from multiple perspectives will provide even more suggestions for improvement than were discussed here, which the government can then use to re-shape the CCB.

³ In 1996, Unemployment Insurance (UI) became known as Employment Insurance (EI); the only difference between the two was related to the eligibility requirements. The UI system eligibility was based on the number of weeks worked, while under the EI system, eligibility was based on the amount of insurable hours worked (Calder, 2006).

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CHAPTER THREE

Family Caregiver Friendly Workplaces and End of Life Caregiving Requests: Examining Workplace Size and Employee Characteristics

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3.1. Abstract

Family friendly workplace policies (FFWPs) refer to workplace features designed to help employees co-manage both their work and personal obligations. Historically family friendly policies have been associated with assisting female employees with maternity and childcare supports. Examples of such policies include flexible work arrangements, leave policies and workplace daycare facilities. With the rising aging population and subsequent emphasis on family caregiving, more workers have the dual responsibilities of maintaining paid work while serving as a caregiver to a terminal individual. This trend suggests that workplaces need to be prepared to accommodate these workers' requests via family friendly workplace policies. In the present article we specifically focus on palliative (or end-of-life) caregiving situations and examine how the adoption of workplace policies can render workplaces 'family friendly' for these specific caregiver-workers. We investigate how workplace size and employee characteristics determine the extent to which any given workplace is 'family caregiver friendly' for such caregiver-workers. To accomplish this we draw on the findings of focused discussions undertaken in 2008 with employers and human resources (HR) professionals across Canada.

Key words: caregiving, employee benefits, employee characteristics, family friendly workplace policies, palliative care

3.2 Introduction

Family friendly workplace policies (FFWPs)¹ are workplace arrangements encompassing both formal and informal features designed to meet the needs of employees with family responsibilities (Callan, 2007). Much of the existing research on FFWPs has focused on women's childbearing issues: namely pregnancy and the rearing of children (Bernard and Philips, 2007; Koerin et al., 2008). This is not surprising given that FFWPs were initially promoted in order to better support the emerging presence of women in the workforce. More specifically, as women became increasingly involved in the workforce there was greater recognition of the need to also support their roles as carers in order to allow them to maintain employment in spite of necessary absences from work (Wright and Wysong, 1998). Over time the carer role has shifted (Wright and Wysong, 1998), resulting in the development and implementation of paternity, bereavement, and adoption leaves, among others –all as forms of FFWPs.

An area that has received little research attention pertains to the ways in which FFWPs are addressing newer kinds of, or increasingly emerging worker demands and particularly the increasing responsibilities being placed on working-aged people to care for aging and dying relatives (McKee et al., 2000). Given the changing demographics of many developed nations, workplaces wishing to remain 'in touch' with the needs of

¹ FFWPs are sometimes referred to as 'family responsive policies' (Glass and Estes, 1997) or 'workplace policies' (Pavalko and Henderson, 2006).

employees are in need of policies that accommodate caregiving specific to the palliative or end-of-life (P/EoL) context. More specifically, public sector workplaces, which place greater value on accommodating work-family balance, would be most interested in developing P/EoL supports. Perhaps a reason for this is due to the higher levels of government accountability in these workplaces. Prior workplace studies have highlighted the general importance of accommodating employees' caregiving responsibilities, but have not focused solely on P/EoL caregiving. The present paper aims to address this knowledge gap through specifically examining the capacity and ability of Canadian workplaces to implement FFWPs aimed at accommodating workers providing such care through examining how requests for these types of leaves are managed with respect to both company size and employee characteristics. Our overall objective is to describe how Canadian workplaces can be considered 'family caregiver friendly' by focusing exclusively on P/EoL caregiving responsibilities. In doing so, this examination will serve to inform Canadian business professionals about the need to develop comprehensive FFWPs geared toward P/EoL caregiving requests within their own workplaces.

To accomplish our above-stated objective, a contextual understanding of caregiving and employment in Canada is first provided. We follow this with a review of the FFWP literature and a description of Canada's Compassionate Care Benefit (CCB). This benefit program serves as a federal mechanism intended to support P/EoL caregiver-workers. Next, an overview of the study design and methods is presented. For the findings, we uncover the relationship between workplace size and the presence of FFWPs

(through examining flexibility, human resources, replacement staff and unions). To continue, the findings also describe how the presence/absence of employee characteristics (length of time with employer, employees' skill level, employment status and gender) hold important outcomes for compassionate leave accommodation. A discussion highlighting the most favourable FFWPs of small and large workplaces in terms of ability to accommodate palliative caregiving requests comes next. We then summarize the ideal employee characteristics most likely to be accommodated for such requests. Finally, a conclusion outlining future research direction and policy implications is brought fourth.

3.2.1 The Need for Family Caregiver Workplace Supports

According to the World Health Organization's definition (2009) 'palliative care is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problem associated with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early detection and assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual'. P/EoL care involves providing physical symptom management, alleviation of pain, social/emotional support, as well as caregiver and bereavement support (Health Canada, 2009). A majority of people at the end-stages of their life express the desire to remain in their homes while being cared for (Knops et al., 2005). Given such desires, it is perhaps not surprising that an estimated 4 to 5 million Canadians are currently providing care to a loved one with a disability, long-term chronic illness, or at the P/EoL stage (Canadian Caregiver Coalition, 2009) and much of this care

takes place in people's homes. Further, and of great importance to the present paper, most of this care is provided by employed women between the ages of 45 and 64 (Cranswick and Dosman, 2008).

In order to ensure that ill and dying people can remain in their homes while being cared for, support for family caregivers is crucial (Cain et al., 2004). Swanberg (2006) describes how caregivers are at risk for negative physical, psychological and financial outcomes, and how these stresses increase when they must juggle the dual roles of caregiver and worker. This dual-role existence often leads to taking significant time off from paid work, using up vacation time or being forced into early retirement, all of which can have drastic economic implications (Cain et al., 2004). At the same time, the provision of informal family caregiving has economic benefits in that it saves the Canadian health care system millions of dollars in health human resources costs every year (Canadian Caregiver Coalition, 2009). There are thus many reasons why supporting family caregivers, including through FFWPs, is a sound measure.

The literature suggests that employees experience heightened workplace difficulties as a result of preoccupation with caregiving responsibilities. For instance, employees who are also caregivers frequently experience 'overall stress' with work; this is documented by continuous worry, increased distraction and the inability to effectively complete paid work tasks (Swanberg, 2006, p.8). Swanberg (2006) has found that workplaces with caregiver supports in place (e.g. paid caregiver leaves and other such FFWPs) decrease employee hardship through assisting workers with meeting caregiving

responsibilities. There is a growing realization that employers need to accommodate workers' work-life balance in general and also specific to managing dual worker-caregiver roles (Lero, 2007). To ensure this continues, workplace supports such as paid labour market leave, flexible work scheduling and means to protect jobs are imperative (Unpaid Caregiving Forum, 2003), particularly through the development of FFWPs (Hegtvedt et al., 2002; Healy 2004; Callan, 2007).

3.2.2 Family Friendly Workplace Policies

The implicit usefulness of FFWPs is evident given the burden associated with being a caregiver-worker, described above. There are also benefits to workplaces of their implementation. For instance, the presence of FFWPs assists with employee recruitment and retention (McKee et al., 2000; Gray and Tudball, 2003; Hara et al., 2005). In fact, employees who place a high value on having access to these policies may choose to work for companies who consider themselves to be 'family friendly' and potentially be prepared to take a reduction in wages to do so (Gray and Tudball, 2003). Aside from company image, which is significant for attracting personnel, workplaces that offer FFWPs have been shown to have more motivated workers (Wright and Wysong, 1998), as well as reductions in employee turnover and economic loss (Poelmans et al., 2003).

Studies have confirmed that more innovative FFWPs are likely to be situated in larger resource-rich companies (Wright and Wysong, 1998; McKee et al., 2000). Small workplaces are unlikely to have formal FFWPs, although they can facilitate individually-negotiated agreements (Glass and Estes, 1997). This is perhaps not surprising given that

small workplaces are less likely to be unionized or to provide workplace benefits (Wright and Wysong, 1998). The presence of human resources (HR) departments within workplaces has also been found to increase the number of FFWPs (Glass and Estes, 1997). Moreover, Kok and Uhlaner (2001) note the direct relationship between workplace size and availability of HR departments: smaller organizations are less likely to have such infrastructure. We can thus imagine that there is a connection between workplace size and the presence of FFWPs.

There are key differences in the uptake of FFWPs across employment sectors (Hoyman and Doer, 2004). For instance, the adoption of FFWPs by public sector employers outnumbers those adopted by private sector companies (Wright and Wysong, 1998; Haar et al., 2005). This discrepancy may be due to public sector employers believing they must do more to attract and retain workers given their typically lower salaries (Haar et al., 2005). Another point to consider is that public sector employers are governed by a larger governmental body which outlines how they should be accommodating their staff's work-life balance. The presence of an internal 'job ladder', referring to seniority and the position of a given worker on that ladder, also has bearing on the presence of FFWPs (Wright and Wysong, 1998). For instance, Wright and Wysong (1998) found that companies with a greater number of 'core workers' (meaning those workers with more specialized positions that are integral to the running of the company) are more likely to provide family friendly benefits to their employees. What these studies here and in the above paragraph collectively demonstrate is that there are

multiple factors that impact upon whether or not a particular workplace will offer FFWPs and thus whether or not an employee will have access to them when providing P/EoL caregiving.

The establishment of FFWPs need not rest solely with individual employers. The Canadian Government, for example, has also recognized the need to support family caregivers and in doing so has created a social benefit program, namely the Compassionate Care Benefit (CCB), designed to enhance the responsiveness of workplaces to caregiver-worker needs.² The CCB is a FFWP because it was designed to provide eligible workers with job-secured time away from work as well as six weeks of Employment Insurance (EI) benefits during P/EoL caregiving. Through the program employees may take leave to provide care to a dying person expected to pass away within a 26 week time frame; the latter requirement is determined via a physician's medical certificate. Federal EI programs such as the CCB are available to all eligible employees regardless of whether they are employed publically or privately. As such, any person who has made adequate contributions into the EI scheme can take up the CCB as long as they meet the program's eligibility criteria; specifically, applicants must show that they have worked 600 insurable hours within the previous 52 week timeframe or the time elapsed

² The CCB is administered through the department of Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC). It is run through the Employment Insurance (EI) program, which is designed to provide income supplementation to individuals who are not working (e.g. unemployment EI) or to those who have taken temporary absence from the workplace, EI provides them with time off of work in addition to income supplementation (sickness, maternity/paternity leave, fishing leave [for self-employed fishers] and compassionate leave).

since their last EI claim in order to qualify (Service Canada, 2009). There is a two-week unpaid waiting period with the CCB (as with all EI programs) before applicants can receive up to 55% of their wages to a maximum of CDN\$447.00 over the six week benefit period (Service Canada, 2009). By virtue of creating this program, Canada's federal Government is promoting, if not even mandating, the development of FFWPs that meet the needs of employed P/EoL caregiver-workers.

3.3 Methods

The central purpose of this research was to understand employers' experiences with the CCB as well as outline their suggestions for improvement. This work is part of a large-scale evaluation of the Benefit, which includes gathering caregivers' and health professionals' experiences of the CCB and their suggestions for improvement in an attempt to influence policy change. The overall study methodology is guided by Patton's (2000) utilization focused evaluation, which emphasizes gathering key stakeholders' perspectives in order to efficiently evaluate a given program or policy, such as the CCB. The current analysis on 'FFWPs' was not part of the original study: yet, upon review of the thematic findings it was clear that respondents were referring to the qualities that make workplaces 'family caregiver friendly' in their discussions about the CCB. It was thus pursued as an analytic focus coming out of the dataset.

Five focus group discussions occurred across Canada in five targeted provinces (British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador) in the

summer and fall of 2008. Focus groups allow for the collection of rich data from participants with key similarities by sparking dynamic discussion (Creswell, 2007), which is why they were selected as the data collection method. The sample was comprised of employers and HR professionals representing various workplace sizes and sectors. Workplaces were not targeted based on the FFWPs available; this information was however, shared during the focus group discussions. To recruit such individuals, the Canadian Council of Human Resources Professionals (CCHRP) provincial satellite offices were first contacted in an effort to recruit through their membership. Next, online membership lists of local Chambers of Commerce and Better Business Bureaus and phone directories for each province were consulted to find contact information for a range of employers. The process of sending study information and invitations to potential participants followed. A few cases of snowball sampling also occurred (i.e., participants sharing study information with others), while the majority was purposeful in order to explicitly have workplace-type diversity among the participants. These recruitment efforts led to a total of 27 individuals taking part in the five focus groups held.

The focus group guide consisted of 14 open-ended questions that examined: participants' knowledge of the CCB and other secured leaves; difficulty/expected difficulties in implementing CCB and other secured leaves in their workplaces; as well as their thoughts on how the CCB could be improved. Because the majority of the participants expressed having little to no knowledge about the CCB, an information sheet about the program was circulated in advance. Prior to starting the discussions participants

reviewed study information, including details of their rights as participants, and signed consent forms. Before the formal questions began, each participant also completed a questionnaire which characterized his/her workplace and employment position. There was a high degree of consistency in the steps that were followed in the data collection process. For example, the same person that was in charge of recruiting/organizing/moderating the focus groups also analyzed the data. Another consistent element was that all groups were held in major urban centres in the five provinces of focus. Such consistency was intended to contribute to the rigour of the data collection and analytic processes and thus the reliability of the findings.

Each focus group discussion lasted roughly 1.5 hours and was digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Upon completion of all focus groups, verbatim transcriptions were prepared and manually coded using thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 2006) so as to identify the main emergent themes and sub-themes, which were organized around the questions asked of participants.

After each transcript was independently coded, the codes generated across the five focus groups were compiled into one central 'codebook.' Specific to the present analysis, the themes and sub-themes relating to 'workplace size' and 'employee characteristics' were extracted and further expanded upon and also compared to the existing literature on FFWPs in order to effectuate a thematic analysis. Regular conversations among the research team and with study collaborators in the form of teleconferences and face-to-

face meetings throughout the data collection and analysis processes led to a high degree of consistency in the interpretation of study findings.

3.4 Findings

The participant sample consists of 27 employers/HR professionals from across the five targeted Canadian provinces. Both public and private sectors were represented. Study participants were not preselected to represent workplaces which were labeled as being 'family friendly' or having FFWPs in place. From the discussion, 'family friendly' features and specific policies were revealed. Of the 27 participants surveyed, only two had direct experience in working with an employee taking the CCB, five had educated their employees about the program and another two were aware of employees in their company who had taken CCB under the advisement of another employer/HR professional representative. The rest of the participants (n=18) had no previous experience with the CCB, although they had informed employees about other secured leaves. The sizes of the workplaces represented varied across the groups. In collapsing Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) workplace size guidelines into two categories, small (1-99 employees) and large workplaces (100+ employees), it can be seen that participants represented workplaces of both size. This is summarized in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 - Workplace Size Represented by Study Participants

Workplace Size (Number of Employees)	Number of Participant Representatives
1-19	6
20-99	3
<i>Total small</i>	<i>9</i>
100-499	4
500+	13
<i>Total large</i>	<i>17</i>
*there were two participants representing one workplace	

Although no questions in the interview guide specifically addressed compassionate features of the workplace or how best to design FFWPs, these issues were revealed along with how they correspond to company size and employee characteristics during the discussions. In the remainder of this section we examine these details. We first examine how workplace size serves as a barrier or facilitator to employees taking compassionate leave, which is a term used here to describe a leave from the workplace to care for someone who is terminal.

We then focus on employee characteristics with respect to requesting leave and in so doing, address length of time with the employer, skill level and full-time or part-time status.

3.4.1 *Workplace Size*

A number of differences exist between small and large workplaces in terms of: how employees are accommodated with time off from work to provide care and how employees' financial difficulties (that result from caregiving leaves) are addressed. An alternate way of conceptualizing these types of accommodations is via 'workplace policies'. As suggested by Glass and Estes (1997), a relationship between workplace policy and workplace size exists, as was mentioned earlier in the paper. This relationship between workplace size and the presence of FFWPs aimed at P/EoL caregiver-workers became clear in the focus group discussions and is probed in the remainder of this section through examining four interrelated features, namely the presence of: (1) flexibility, (2) human resources, (3) replacement staff, and (4) unions. In so doing we provide insight into the ideal characteristics of a 'family caregiver friendly' workplace.

3.4.1.1 Flexibility

The literature suggests that the extent to which a workplace can be flexible has the most profound influence on a worker's ability to manage both work and family life (Strachan and Burgess, 1998; Haar et al., 2005; Callan, 2007). For instance, Gray and Tudball (2003) mention how flexibility around start and finish times can be crucial for employees as it allows work schedules to be modified to allow for unexpected demands resulting from family issues. A central theme which emerged from the data is that small workplaces were found to be more flexible than larger workplaces. An example with

respect to flexibility when an employee requests leave to care for a P/EoL care recipient is illustrated by a small employer:

A larger corporation with public shareholders and a board and all that it's a different, you know, I think it's a different scenario in terms of the rules, applying the rules and whatnot. We're a lot more flexible, we can be because we're that small.

However, Glass and Estes (1997) suggest that it is the less generous leave policies and benefits inherent to small organizations which propel them to compensate by offering more flexible work schedule options. These small workplaces, characterized as not having set FFWPs around leaves, are often unable to offer financial benefits; as a result, the data suggest that the leaves they do offer were typically unpaid and short. These workplaces simply lack the resources to economically support their employees while they provide compassionate care.

In contrast, in-house policies regarding compassionate leave were more likely to be features of larger workplaces and are considered to be less flexible as they tend to prioritize routine and consistency for all employees. The majority of study participants (n=17) represented public sector workplaces which were large. The literature labels the public sector as a leader with respect to the development of policies to support staff with caregiving responsibilities, such as through the creation of FFWPs (Arksey, 2002; Hoyman and Over, 2004). A good example of such a policy is the offering of 'career breaks' throughout the length of one's career, which surfaced in the data and was

confirmed via a study by Arksey (2002) who notes these as being important to caregivers³. An employer participant representing the Federal Government shares what employees are provided, thus making extended time for caregiving possible: *'Care of immediate family can be taken for anything including end-of-life...I think you can take it up to five years unpaid.'* Permanent Federal Government employees have a total of five years that they can use throughout their career to take unpaid leaves of absence for any reason.

Unlike the previous example, the presence of set rules, mostly characteristic of large companies, suggests that employees may feel limited, in that they must receive the same treatment as others in (typically highly unique) caregiving situations. As P/EoL caregiving can be quite unpredictable and vary considerably across situations, what may be accommodating for one employee may not work for another. Uniformity is expected of large companies with respect to following procedures when an employee takes a compassionate leave; often the first case is seen as the precedent to which all other cases are modeled. This area is one which small companies appear to have mastery over: they have the ability to quickly adjust on a case-by-case basis and accommodate each personal leave:

³ Specifically, career breaks provide employees with extended time off from work to focus on personal reasons (e.g. to provide care to a loved one or travel) or for professional development (e.g. furthering education).

My husband is a small employer and he had an employee who lost a spouse...he just gave her whatever time she wanted off right, she didn't want to take a year off...they're a small employer, they know that if they have to do this for somebody else, they know it's not going to be 100 people, there might be 5 people they have to do that for.

Both small and large companies were found to have some form of bankable sick leave time intended to provide relief in times of personal sickness. However, employees had the flexibility to use the time to provide care. Further, both had vacation time that employees often used for the same purpose. Some workplaces had a lack of 'bankable' personal/sick/holiday days, which means that employees may be quite limited in the number of leave days they have at their disposal when caregiving demands increase. A drawback of using the flexibility of accumulated days for family caregiving is that there is little time left for being sick or taking holiday breaks.

The ability for a workplace to financially accommodate employees on leave should also be considered as a form of flexibility. The uncertainty of how long employees will be off without a steady paycheck was a common theme discussed by study participants. Participants from larger public workplaces expressed their willingness to pay the employee's two week EI waiting period as well as top-up the 55% EI income supplement to a full 90-100% to make it easier for employees taking any EI benefit, such

as the CCB.⁴ A possible reason for this is that larger public workplaces may have increased cash-flow when compared with non-for-profit workplaces, either small or large. For instance, an employer representing 1400 employees discusses his/her readiness to offer EI top-ups: *'If I had an employee coming to see me because they needed time off to take care of a sick parent or child, whatever the situation would be...we will top up to 95% of earnings.'*

3.4.1.2 Human Resources

A limiting feature of small workplaces given their smaller pool of employees is their common absence of in-house HR departments. HR representatives are typically the first contact to the employee in terms of inquiring about FFWPs and other benefits and are more likely to be found in larger workplaces. Employees who have access to this resource are generally more aware of all options open to them. This is expressed by a study participant representing a large workplace with an HR department through speculating about the difficulties that employees in smaller companies face in accessing benefits and other information: *'But I'm just wondering about much smaller businesses that do not have HR, how would they [the employees] find out [about available benefits] because they have no clue at all.'*

⁴ A top-up refers to an amount paid by the employer or company above and beyond the benefit amount in order to further supplement income.

A role of HR professionals is to guide employees through the various options for leave, prioritizing income security. In compassionate care situations, companies with HR infrastructure are at an advantage. When new employees are hired in larger companies, there are orientation programs run by HR concerning available EI programs and the in-house benefits offered, including P/EoL caregiving leaves. Although focus group participants from smaller businesses expressed their gratitude for the available government benefit programs, such as the CCB, it was found that many representatives from smaller workplaces were unaware of the details of CCB leave, such as eligibility requirements and details around applying. Thus, an employer who was either unaware or unsure of the details is unable to clearly educate employees about the CCB. Moreover, smaller employers were more likely to juggle multiple roles in addition to HR responsibilities and expressed having a lack of time to both learn about and discuss government caregiving leaves with staff.

3.4.1.3 Replacement Staff

Smaller workplaces have a limited pool of staff to begin with, and thereby lack replacement staff to call on. Although small employers were eager to accommodate employees as best they could, having less staff to call on is a general disadvantage for them when longer leaves (more than 8 weeks) are requested. The following example illustrates this drawback for employees and employers of smaller workplaces:

So I find from an employee's perspective that it would be limiting, especially if you are with an employer that can't accommodate a longer period you know. Because it can be a hardship for smaller employers [to accommodate for more than 8 weeks], not that they are not compassionate, just that it's not as easy... If I don't have the people to do that same job and if I don't have the personnel for eight weeks it makes it tough.

Given that the data suggested an overwhelming need to expand the leave time of the CCB program, recognizing that people can remain in a P/EoL state for a much longer time than 8 weeks (a suggestion was made to increase the length of the CCB to 26 weeks) this would place greater pressure on smaller workplaces to find replacement staff in order to accommodate their employees on CCB.

On the other hand, larger companies are generally better equipped in terms of available staff. With plenty of casual/part-time staff to call on when full-time employees need to leave for an unspecified amount of time, the employer can be compassionate in offering as much time as the employee needs. Interestingly, this suggests that some workers' access to the CCB and other FFWPs is dependent on a pool of workers who may not have access to the same privileges. The ready pool of staff on hand means that larger workplaces can sustain longer employee absences than smaller workplaces can. The unpredictability in length of time needed for someone to die, coupled with the available replacement staff means that larger workplaces are generally more 'family

caregiver friendly' because they allow for an employee to be off work and spend time with their loved one.

3.4.1.4 Unions

Unions protect workers with respect to their relations with their employers (Craig and Solomon, 1993). As shown in Table 3.2, of the workplaces surveyed, it was more likely for larger rather than smaller workplaces to be unionized.

Table 3.2- Unionization Rates According to Workplace Size

Workplace Size (Number of Employees)	Non-Unionized	Unionized
Small (1-99)	8	1
Large (100-500+)	7	10
*there were two participants representing one workplace		

Each union has a set of collective agreements which govern what employees do in various circumstances, such as support what is offered in compassionate care situations. Many unions have bargained for extensive P/EoL caregiving benefits for employees and their spouses. An important tenet of collective agreements is their ability to secure employees' jobs while they are providing care. It was found that large non-unionized workplaces can be more flexible than their unionized counterparts regarding individual-level accommodation. Focus group participants discussed how unionized employees may

appreciate the availability of guidelines, procedures, and financial security when taking compassionate leave. However, it was found that non-unionized firms could generally offer more leave time to staff, which is highly regarded to those providing care to a loved one at the end of life.

3.4.2 Employee Characteristics

The degree to which a workplace was considered to be ‘family caregiver friendly’ was also found to be impacted by the type of employee requesting a leave. Here we discuss a number of salient employee characteristics, including: (1) the length of time with employer; (2) the employee’s skill level; (3) employment status, whether full-time or part-time; and; (4) gender. The presence/absence of these characteristics hold important outcomes for compassionate leave accommodation arrangements.

3.4.2.1 Length of Time with Employer

It is difficult for new employees to request time off to provide compassionate care. Regardless of whether they are employed by a small or large employer, they have little, if any, banked sick or vacation time to utilize if they need time off. In the early stages of employment, an employee may be on contract or in a probationary period, both of which can render employees ineligible for existing workplace benefits. In terms of using the CCB, newly hired staff are typically ineligible if they have worked less than 600 hours, which typically takes upwards to six months to attain. Another potential drawback for new employees is that they may yet to have established a positive

reputation within the company. For instance, an employer may be skeptical of someone newly hired approaching them for a caregiving leave; they may think that they have no intention of returning, that it might set a precedent for their behavior as being undependable or requesting leaves often, or that they are dishonest:

It's always this sense of pessimism if you will, around the authenticity of their request. The sense that is this person telling me the truth or are they fabricating some of the truth. And that's a small, small minority but that does happen.

Employees who have been with a company for a longer time have a clear advantage when it comes to requesting time off for P/EoL caregiving leave. Firstly, providing that companies allow bankable time to transfer from year-to year, these employees have the option of using their banked sick leave and/or vacation time to use for P/EoL caregiving, which an employer discusses: *'Well one of the [employees] has 400 hours which is a lot...they work very hard, like sometimes they work seven days a week...if something were to happen they would have no problem.'* Furthermore, long-term employees are most likely well-known and have a good reputation with employers/managerial staff who can be sympathetic to the needs of their valued employees: *'If we have a longstanding employee, good record and stuff like that, we tend to take care of our own and say go, deal with what you need to deal with it and we will manage.'*

3.4.2.2 Skill Level

The skill level of an employee who is requesting the leave has been shown to have an impact on how employers manage compassionate leave requests. High-level skilled employees (e.g., payroll supervisors), for example, typically have specialized positions which require extensive education and workforce training and are thus integral to the running of a company. These positions typically affect company workflow and as a result may be managed differently when an employee asks for time off, as it may be challenging to find another to fill-in. The workload is typically managed among existing employees who have their own responsibilities:

Professional staff or physical therapy and things like that, they are limited in numbers so they will just share the responsibilities through other occupational therapists or something like that.... I'm not sure about physicians, there are not even enough of them, so I can't see a replacement.

On the opposite end of the spectrum are low-skilled employees, whose job descriptions consist of duties which do not require extensive education or training, who occupy entry level positions. As an employer describes, for these types of positions, employee fill-ins are easier to find:

A lot of the entry levels they have an essential staffing list and there could be up to 800 people on that list...so 200 of them could be domestic workers and 50 could be service workers and 25 could be clerical...so if someone was off for six

weeks they would just block a six-week schedule for someone from central staff and they would do the job.

Therefore, by the very nature of the breakdown between skilled and less-skilled employees, some workplaces are more family caregiver friendly than others when it comes to filling the spot of employees on P/EoL caregiving leaves.

Unlike with other types of employees, companies need to be sure that highly-skilled employees return to work and are, therefore, especially sensitive in accommodating their requests for leave. In other words, the value of these employees makes it more important for employers to meet their needs in order to retain them. Interestingly, highly-skilled workers are typically concentrated in more responsive organizations or have access to formal benefits from which other classes of workers are excluded (Glass and Estes, 1997). Given this, workplaces may be particularly 'family caregiver friendly' to their highly-skilled workers.

3.4.2.3 Full-Time vs. Part-Time Status

A full-time employee typically works 8 hours a day, 5 days a week; whereas a part-time employee works fewer hours and/or days. Both employee type is distinct in what is afforded them in terms of P/EoL caregiving requests. Clear advantages of full-time employment include increased wages when compared to their part-time employee counterparts, which provides more of a cushion if an employee takes time off for P/EoL caregiving. Additionally, many of the FFWP policies cater to providing benefits to a

company's full-time workforce. Further, full-time work for at least a year, ensures eligibility for the CCB.

Employees with part-time positions are at an advantage when it comes to managing work and home; often, the individual scheduling flexibility better allow them to manage both sets of responsibilities as they can choose the times they are willing to work. One employer recounts how a full-time employee switched to part-time while providing P/EoL care before eventually taking a leave of absence: *'she was working part-time for most of July...and then by the end of July she realized it was probably terminal with her mother so and she said I don't know when I'm going to be back.'* Although this example recounts the experience of an employee who moved from a full-time position into a part-time position, it serves to portray how an individual can manage both sets of responsibilities while caring for a progressively terminal individual.

3.4.2.4 Gender

The types of sectors male and female employees tended to work in were also discussed in the study data as an issue of relevance to supporting P/EoL caregiver-workers through FFWPs. It was understood that there is an importance in developing FFWPs in certain sectors which are dominated by women who, as previously described, provide the majority of P/EoL caregiving. According to Statistics Canada (2006), service industries such as teaching, health and sales predominantly employ women. Specifically, 67% of employees in these industries are women between the ages of 25-54 (Statistics Canada, 2006), which corresponds with the female age group most likely to be

caregivers. The majority of female employees represented by participants were employed by service, professional or health industries, while the male workforce tended to dominate industry, manufacturing and utilities. In addition, focus group participants stated how their female employees were more likely than male employees to request caregiving leaves. Given that the majority of caregivers are women, the industries which typically employ more females need to be especially sensitive in recognizing their caregiving needs and adopt generous caregiver-friendly policies.

3.5 Discussion

As was highlighted in the introduction, FFWPs can encompass formal *and* informal characteristics intended to support employees in managing their work and family lives. This analysis re-affirms the usefulness of both formal FFWPs, more characteristic of larger workplaces (e.g., the presence of human resources, availability of replacement staff and unionization) and informal FFWPs, more characteristic of smaller workplaces (e.g., such as flexibility). Smaller workplaces were more likely than larger workplaces to have informal FFWPs such as flexibility. The literature highlights flexibility as being significant to helping employees manage both caregiving and workplace commitments. Further, larger workplaces were found to exhibit more formal FFWPs, as they were likely to have HR infrastructure in place to assist their staff, their own in-house compassionate caregiving policies (often a hallmark trait of unions specifically), and pool of replacement workers.

With respect to employee characteristics, features with respect to length of time with the workplace were unveiled; those who have been employed the longest tend to have an advantage over newly hired employees. The data have also shown differences among employees with specialized positions and those with less-specialized positions with respect to how compassionate leave requests are managed. Unlike the less-specialized positions which tend to have ready casual and part-time workers who could step in, the highly specialized positions do not have ready replacements who can easily do this. Therefore, for P/EoL leave requests, less-skilled workers tend to have an advantage because they can typically take longer leaves. Lastly, full-time and part-time workers each have their own positive points. For example, since company policies and collective agreements have identified full-time workers as the central beneficiaries of their family leave policies, they generally have more resources available to them. Part-time employees appear to have a clear advantage due to their modified schedules; they can manage their work and home responsibilities with relative ease. As described, women make up the majority of caregivers in Canada, and with the expected increase of the elderly population, more women will need to provide this care in the future and workplaces need to be prepared. Sectors which tend to employ the highest percentages of women need to increase the amount of 'family caregiver friendly' features they provide.

The findings also have relation to the labour market segmentation theory which accounts for the labour-force marginalization of certain groups on the basis of race, sex, educational attainment and industry grouping, resulting from social and political forces

(Bauder, 2001; Hudson, 2007). According to Reich et al. (1973) and labourers are grouped into either primary or secondary groupings. Jobs which can be placed in the primary groupings often require specialized education and skills; employees are usually rewarded by workplaces with increased wages and opportunity for job advancement (Reich et al., 1973; Leontaridi 1998). On the opposite end are jobs which would typically fall under the secondary grouping: low-paying jobs with high turnover which require little, if any education and little opportunity for career advancement (Reich et al., 1973; Leontaridi, 1998). Secondary grouping positions are mostly filled with women and other marginalized workers (Reich et al., 1973). Labour market segmentation theory has relevance for thinking conceptually about the impacts of the CCB and other FFWPs on workers. For instance, employees belonging to the primary labour grouping have a clear advantage than those in secondary labour occupations; they are most likely to work in responsive organizations which offer FFWPs. Moreover, these employees are relatively stable in their positions, which would surely guarantee enough hours to qualify for CCB. Secondary grouping employees, in contrast, work in high-turnover environments which could be challenging to earn enough EI hours to qualify. In addition, these workplaces are less-likely to offer FFWPs to accommodate their employees.

3.5.1 Implications for Canadian Workplaces

A recent report from the Special Senate Committee on Aging (2009) emphasizes the importance for Canadian workplaces to become more caregiver-friendly and advocates for both formal and informal means for achieving this. Our current study builds

on this key report by describing what the informal and formal FFWPs are and their particular advantages. For instance, the advantages of informal policies such as flexibility of scheduling and financial flexibility have been identified specific to P/EoL caregiver-workers. In terms of formal policies, we highlighted how the following are of benefit to family caregivers: company leave policies, career breaks, bankable time, HR departments, replacement staff, and unionization. This paper also explored how the aforementioned caregiver-friendly policies relate to company size, with larger workplaces exhibiting more formal policies and smaller workplaces exhibiting more informal policies. As confirmed in the larger literature (Glass and Estes, 1997; Wright and Wysong, 1998; McKee et al., 2000; Akyeampong, 2002 and Comfort et al., 2003), these results resonate with the understanding that larger workplaces offer more formal family-friendly policies and smaller workplaces offer more informal family-friendly policies; the advantages of both forms have been discussed. We proceeded further by reporting key employee characteristics that affect their requests for caregiving leave, which include: length of time with company, skill-level, full-time vs. part-time status and gender. Also confirmed through previous research, the role that the aforementioned employee characteristics play in determining which types of family-friendly policies are offered (Glass and Estes, 1997; Arksey, 1997; Hoyman and Duer, 2004; Koerin et al., 2008).

The study data unveiled more issues relating to accommodating employees of larger companies. In practice, however, the majority (98%) of Canadian workplaces are small (Industry Canada, 2009). As such, further research needs to focus on the unique

needs of smaller workplaces and employers in accommodating workers' caregiving requests (Arksey, 2002). This way, workplaces of all sizes can be as efficient as possible in terms of the FFWPs they offer with respect to compassionate caregiving, which will enable them to better accommodate the needs of Canada's aging population and subsequent demands on workers to serve simultaneously as caregivers.

Generally, we have presented both favourable and unfavourable 'family caregiver friendly' features which are specific to workplace size and characteristics of employees. Through being aware of the facilitating features of a workplace that can enable employees to provide compassionate care, Canadian companies can adopt them as best practices in order to keep their workforce happy. An outcome is that there may be increased loyalty and productivity. Therefore, both employers and workers benefit from adopting such features.

3.6 Study Limitations

Of the professionals represented in the focus groups, HR professionals were most likely to agree to participate based on their familiarity with the CCB, as their job descriptions demand a working knowledge of government employee benefits. As was mentioned previously, it is the larger companies most likely to have HR departments, which may explain the higher representation of large workplaces in our sample. Another factor to consider was that many participants had no administrative experience with the CCB, and answered the questions based on what they had done in similar circumstances

(i.e. maternity leaves) or what they expected to encounter should their workplaces experience future CCB caregiving leave requests. Because participants were able to draw upon parallel experiences we do not believe that this limitation has negatively affected the quality of the data available.

3.7 Conclusion

The specific objective of the paper has been to describe how Canadian workplaces can be considered ‘family caregiver friendly’ by focusing exclusively on P/EoL caregiving responsibilities in order to address a specific knowledge gap. In doing so the analysis also contributes to an ongoing evaluative study of the CCB, which is a national FFWP available to eligible employees. The qualitative data collected from five focus groups held across Canada has revealed that both workplace size and employee characteristics are critical to enacting FFWPs in Canadian workplaces. Such a finding holds a number of implications for creating ‘family caregiver friendly’ workplaces for P/EoL caregiver-workers.

3.8 References

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CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

4.1 Introduction

The objectives of this thesis were broad. In addition to delivering practical suggestions intended on improving a Canadian social program, (achieved through highlighting employers/human resources (HR) professionals' experiences with the Compassionate Care Benefit (CCB), it brings attention to a number of workplace concerns. First, chapter 3 examines how workplace size serves as either a barrier or facilitator with respect to employees taking Palliative or end-of-life (P/EoL) leave. This chapter also provides an understanding of how employee characteristics influence their requests for P/EoL leave. Although the CCB is referred to in chapter 3, the focus of the chapter is intended to be on P/EoL caregiving requests in general. Chapter 2 highlights the expectations that employers/HR personnel had of the CCB relating to how it meets the needs of their employees, how well it meets their workplace informational needs and how well it can be incorporated within company features. Further, the actual realities of implementing the CCB in practice were also discussed. The next section will go into more detail by providing a brief overview of the significant findings from Chapters 2 and 3. A discussion of the study limitation then follows. This thesis concludes with a presentation of the policy and research contributions, future research implications along with some final remarks.

4.2 Overview of Significant Findings

4.2.1 Suggestions for Improving the CCB

The objectives of Chapter 2 were to outline the initial expectations of the CCB program that employers/HR personnel had, in addition to the actual outcomes of having it implemented in the workplace. In so doing, the chapter offers suggestions for improving the CCB so it better meets the needs of applicants and their workplaces.

With respect to the CCB meeting the needs of those who apply, their multiple roles as employee, caregiver and EI contributors were considered. The CCB was found to be unsatisfactory with respect to meeting the needs of its intended applicants. Future changes were proposed, including: speeding up the processing time, eliminating the unpaid waiting period, extending the length of the CCB to however many weeks as individual would be eligible for EI Benefits, allowing multiple family member applicants to each take their own CCB leave, and preventing the CCB from ending on the day of death.

As for the CCB meeting the needs of the workplaces, it was found unable to meet the informational needs around comprehension of the actual legislation, as well as direction with respect to how to best interpret the leave to staff applicants. Also, the CCB proved to be unsuccessful in being manifested in workplace practice, as there were a number of unexpected repercussions in the workplace, including difficulty managing workload during the leave, and difficulty managing a discontinuous leave. However, the

Benefit was able to be integrated within workplace leave procedures. For instance, employers/HR personnel mentioned how they prefer their staff to follow a process when requesting time off for caregiving; the CCB meshed well within that framework, and was even regarded as a useful resource before going on an unpaid leave of absence. Additionally, the CCB generally had no affect on employee company benefits including vacation time or seniority. Hence, the recommendations for improvement here do not suggest altering the CCB program (as they do with meeting applicant needs) but imply changes to the way the government disseminates information. First, to address the lack of workplace knowledge/awareness of the CCB throughout the country, the government should consider distributing brief information sheets to all workplaces which informs employers/HR about the basics of the program. Next, the government needs to consider developing specialized supports for workplace representatives at Service Canada and EI Departments in order to answer questions and explain the application process to employees. An interactive information website with a link to a video file depicting a real person explaining the CCB application process and its features would also be beneficial to all stakeholders involved.

4.2.2 Workplace Concerns

The objectives of Chapter 3 were to describe the usefulness of both informal (flexibility) and formal (HR, replacement staff, and unionization) features of workplaces when requests for leaves arise. Further, Chapter 3 outlines how employee characteristics

(length of time with workplace, skill level, full-time vs. part-time status and gender) impact P/EoL caregiving requests.

4.2.2.1 Informal and Formal Features

The analysis suggests that smaller workplaces were more likely to be flexible around employee scheduling, such as allowing employees to have flexibility over start and finish times which Gray and Tudball (2003) highlight as being crucial when managing unexpected situations. In a similar vein, small employers were typically not implored to follow existing policies or procedures unlike larger companies and unionized companies specifically. These policies or guidelines, typically in place to ensure consistency for all employees can often be limiting for P/EoL caregiving due to the unpredictable nature and case-by-case variation. Larger workplaces did exhibit flexibility to the extent that they could often choose to pay their staff's unpaid CCB waiting periods or top-up the income received during the leave period from 80-100%. Large, Federal organizations are able to offer their staff flexibility in the form of 5-year career breaks, which can be taken for anything, including P/EoL caregiving. Both small and large workplaces had some form of bankable sick leave and/or vacation time that could be used at their discretion. Pavalko and Henderson (2006) consider bankable time useful for employees' care work.

Larger workplaces were far more likely than smaller workplaces to have HR infrastructure in place, including frontline HR personnel on hand to advise employees directly (Cardon and Stevens, 2004). Generally, employees who have access to HR

infrastructure have a greater awareness of the available Benefit options open to them, both through the government and within the company (Glass and Estes, 1997).

Another advantage of larger workplaces is their greater availability of replacement staff. When an employee requests a leave from the workplace to care for a dying loved one, their employer can be compassionate in offering time off because they are not worried about how the workload will be managed. As a result, larger workplaces typically can sustain longer absences. A number of employee characteristics (to be discussed shortly) influence the degree to which replacements can be utilized, as does the characteristics of the particular company and the nature of the work carried out by the employee taking the leave.

Unionized workplaces are also more likely to be larger and was included here as a formal feature with respect to P/EoL caregiving requests for several reasons. To begin, unionized workplaces are likely to have set collective agreements in place which address such caregiving requests, affording their workforce with paid time off work. One drawback to these set policies (and applicable to large workplaces in general) is that employees may be limited due to the fact that all employees are offered the same accommodations; a set amount of weeks off of work often does not coincide with the unpredictable nature of P/EoL caregiving. Ideally a case-by-case approach, offered through smaller workplaces and larger, non-unionized workplaces is optimal.

4.2.2.2 Employee Characteristics

The length of time a particular employee has been with a company can have tremendous influence over how they are accommodated in P/EoL caregiving situations. To illustrate, newer staff have several disadvantages. To begin, they may be ineligible for company caregiving benefits if they are in a contract or probationary phase of their employment. Further, they may have little, if any, banked sick or vacation time to utilize or may have not worked enough hours to qualify for the CCB. Further, newer staff have not had much opportunity to establish a positive reputation within the company. What this means is that employers may be skeptical of being approached for a leave so early in their employment.

The skill-level of an employee also needs to be taken into consideration. The analysis uncovered two ways that skill-level can affect how employers manage P/EoL caregiving leave requests (Starrels et al., 1995). First, companies understand that highly-skilled positions are crucial; these employees need extensive training and their positions typically affect company workflow. As a result, workplaces which employ a vast number of highly-skilled workers are eager to retain them and thereby have a greater likelihood of adopting more Family Friendly Workplace Policies (FFWPs) to accommodate them (Wright and Wysong, 1996). Secondly, companies recognize the value of highly-skilled employees with respect to the day-to-day running of a company. Companies may be hesitant in offering too much time off for these employees as their work is so necessary and specific that available replacements are hard to find.

Full-time employees are typically advantaged over part-time employees when requesting P/EoL caregiving leave for a number of reasons. As previously mentioned, many FFWPs specifically cater to a company's full-time workforce so they may have provisions in place in the form of company leaves. Next, full-time employees are typically eligible for the CCB given the amount of hours they have worked. Compared to part-timers, full-timers' wages provide more of a financial cushion if they went on an unpaid leave of absence. Although part-time employees may lack these advantages, their reduced hours and schedules typically afford them with the flexibility to co-manage both their caregiving responsibilities and work duties.

Gender also impacted workplace caregiving requests. To begin, women were more likely to request these leaves, as they were the ones most likely to provide care. In general, service, professional and health industries employed the most women. Males tended to dominate industrial sectors, manufacturing and utilities.

4.3 Study Limitations

It is apparent that the data set used for this research was relatively small and thus, the ability to generalize the findings presented are limited. HR professionals were most likely, as compared to other workplace professionals (general employers, presidents, managers) to agree to participate in the focus groups based on their awareness/familiarity with the CCB or experience administering other EI programs in general. Being that these professionals typically are employed in larger companies, larger-sized workplaces were

over-represented in our sample. However, even though HR professionals may have had greater awareness of the CCB, as compared to other workplace professionals, the majority had little to no experience with using it. As a result, for many of the specific questions asked about the CCB, they drew on their experience with other EI Benefit programs, namely the Maternity Leave Benefit. Another limitation, especially apparent where employee characteristics are discussed (in relation to requesting P/EoL caregiving leaves) and with respect to the degree to which the CCB meets applicants needs (as caregivers, employees and EI contributors) is that the employer/HR perspective rather than the employee perspective is used.

4.4 Policy Contributions

The findings of this work are highly applicable. Chapter 2 provides specific suggestions for changing the CCB so that it can best meet the multiple needs of its intended applicants. It also clarifies the specific problems that workplaces have (or intend on having) with implementing this particular Benefit. In addition, a few proposed strategies were targeted in which the government can increase awareness of the CCB for workplaces.

4.5 Research Contributions

4.5.1 Geography Literature

This piece can also serve to inform geographic research areas, namely the areas of health and labour geography. In the realm of health geography, and specifically in

caregiving research, it has been established that the majority of caregivers are women who face unique burdens in trying to manage their care and work (Milligan, 2000; Crooks et al., 2007; Giesbrecht et al., 2009). Although this thesis did not delve as deeply into womens' role in caregiving, it did reinforce the challenges of being both a 'caregiver' and an 'employee' while demonstrating the significance in developing policies to support working caregivers (Keefe et al., 2007).

Labour geographers appreciate that in order to study employees, their needs to be an awareness of their multiple roles in society (Castree, 2007). This thesis considers the multiple roles of CCB applicants (as caregivers, employees and EI contributors), and in so doing, provides a rationale for their dissatisfaction with the program. In labour geography there has been an absence of research directed toward evaluation and policy suggestions (Castree, 2007). Being that this thesis also serves to inform policy, it provides an example of how labour geography can serve to enhance real-world policy outcomes.

4.5.2 FFWP Literature

This thesis, given its specific emphasis, also serves to inform research on FFWPs in several ways. First, this work has re-affirmed that workplace size impacts the variation in the types of FFWPs offered (Glass and Estes 1997; Arksey, 2002). To date, there has been a lack of emphasis in the literature on P/EoL caregiving issues and accommodative measures in the workplace (McKee et al., 2000; Bernard and Philips, 2007; Koerin et al.,

2008). The study is therefore not only of interest to the academic research community, but to workplaces who can expect gains in productivity resulting from adopting policies geared toward work-family balance (Haar et al., 2005).

4.6 Conclusions and Future Research

The analysis unveiled a greater number of thematic issues than was originally expected. The original purpose of this research was to evaluate the CCB from a workplace perspective, as well as to put forth recommendations on how to improve the CCB. The interview questions employed in each focus group were very CCB-specific, so it was quite interesting to uncover themes relating to workplace size, employee characteristics, expectations, values, family friendly features, and informal and formal policies, among others. It is evident from the previous section that there are numerous ways that this thesis can contribute to research and social policy improvement.

In terms of furthering the work on the CCB evaluation, future research needs to focus on the unique perspectives of small workplaces and their employers with respect to administering CCB given that the majority of Canadian workplaces are small. Although the data unveiled an abundance of issues with the CCB (regarding its ability to meet employee and workplace needs) and subsequent recommendations for improvement from participants with hardly any experience with the CCB, future research studies should uncover even more issues if all study participants had actual first-hand experiences with its implementation in the workplace. If the research team could attain the statistics on the successful cross-country CCB claims, it would be possible to hone in on the actual

workplaces where the CCB applicants were employed and consult with the professionals involved in its administration.

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