

# **JointHealth**

# Canada's Best Workplaces for Employees Living with Arthritis

DGRAMPROGRAMP

## Arthritis Consumer Experts selects City of Ottawa and Aboriginal Peoples Television Network for best arthritis workplace practices in Canada

**VANCOUVER, BC, February 7, 2017** – To recognize the best arthritis workplace practices in Canada, Arthritis Consumer Experts (ACE) today announced the winners of its third annual search for Canada's Best Workplaces for Employees Living with Arthritis.

Many Canadian workers struggle to find the right balance between work, family and personal responsibilities, particularly employees with chronic disease who are becoming an increasingly high proportion of the workforce due to aging, arthritis chief among them. Canadian employers who understand chronic disease, particularly the impact of a disease like arthritis, are implementing adaptations in their work environments to accommodate employees. Based on workplace insights shared by employees and company managers, ACE is awarding the City of Ottawa and Aboriginal Peoples Television Network for their arthritis awareness, prevention and benefits practices in the workplace.

"Research at Arthritis Research Canada shows that workers with arthritis who have more flexible work arrangements, more autonomy on how they do their job and organize their schedule, and who have received job accommodations, are more productive at work and less likely to become work disabled<sup>1</sup>," said Cheryl Koehn, Founder and President, Arthritis Consumer Experts. Koehn added: "During the past three years of our Best Arthritis Workplaces program, employees with arthritis have consistently told us that finding a workplace that supports job accommodation is a priority in their job choice, even at the expense of salary or advancement."

Job accommodation is vitally important for Canadian workers with arthritis due to the significant impact arthritis has on the work force and its cost to society. Arthritis is the most common cause of work disability in Canada, costing \$13.6 billion per year, according to an estimate of the economic

1 Lacaille D, White MA, Rogers PA, Backman CL, Gignac MA, Esdaile JM. A proof-of-concept study of the "Employment and Arthritis: Making It Work" program. Arthritis Rheum 2008:15;59(11):1647-55.

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burden of illness by Statistics Canada – 1 in 136 workers has rheumatoid arthritis, the most disabling and costly type of arthritis and that number will double in 30 years. In addition, studies by Dr. Diane Lacaille, Senior Research Scientist at Arthritis Research Canada, have clearly shown that the cost of being present, but less productive, is higher than the cost of being absent, with a workforce survey showing the cost was four times higher than the cost of missed days from work.

Commenting on ACE's award program, managers at the winning organizations shared the view that what employees living with arthritis really want out of companies is flexibility, and an opportunity for better work-life balance.

"The health and wellbeing of our employees is incredibly important at the City of Ottawa, which is why we have developed workplace accommodation policies and initiatives to provide an inclusive, barrier-free work environment," said Mayor Jim Watson. "This award recognizes the work we have done and the value we place on our employees."



"APTN is an exceptional workplace, and our organization's success depends on our employees. We recognize the importance of each team member's health and well-being," says Jean La Rose, APTN Chief Executive Officer. "Our benefits often exceed those offered by many other companies and are designed to keep our team – physically, emotionally, spiritually and financially healthy. This award truly reflects the great amount of respect for and understanding of the complexities employees living with a chronic disease face."



In the third year of the program that recognizes the best arthritis practices of leading companies throughout Canada, ACE received more than 56 submissions. Many of the nominated companies, including the City of Ottawa and the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, cover 100 percent of the cost of their employees' health care premiums. At the same time, the vast majority of our nominated companies also provide a wide variety of alternative work options that enable employees with arthritis to deal with pain, stiffness, fatigue, depression, or flares, including compressed work weeks, flexible working hours, job sharing, short term sick leave, rest periods and reduced work week.

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#### About Canada's Best Workplaces for Employees Living with Arthritis Consumer Experts

Canada's Best Workplaces for Employees Living with Arthritis is a national campaign to help employers better understand arthritis in the workplace and recognize companies who offer exceptional work environments for their employees living with arthritis. Through a rigorous selection process using wide-ranging criteria, Arthritis Consumer Experts evaluates Canadian companies that apply best arthritis practices. The application process delivers insights to further strengthen Canadian companies' approaches to creating a more productive and arthritis-friendly work environment by helping employers and employees assess their companies' awareness of arthritis and support systems for employees living with the disease.

### **About Arthritis Consumer Experts**

Arthritis Consumer Experts is a national organization that provides free, science-based information and education programs in both official languages to people with arthritis. ACE serves people living with all forms of arthritis by helping them take control of their disease and improve their quality of life through education and empowerment. Founded and led by people with arthritis, ACE also actively advocates on arthritis health and policy issues, through ACE's JointHealth™ family of programs and the Arthritis Broadcast Network, directly to consumers/patients, healthcare professionals, media and government. ACE is guided by a strict set of guiding principles, set out by an advisory board comprised of leading scientists, medical professionals and informed arthritis consumers.

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