

The True Cost of Caregiving

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Monica, a business associate of mine, reached out to me last week. She's worried, anxious and can't sleep most nights, and it's not just COVID-19 exhaustion. She's barely coping with caring for her aging parents but is also squished with the responsibility of raising her two teenage girls. She's missing hours at work and not sure how much longer she can cope.

Caregiving statistics speak for themselves

Monica's far from alone. Stats Canada reports that **over half of caregivers felt worried or anxious because of their caregiving responsibilities**, and about the same percentage felt tired during the past 12 months. Not only is Monica stressed, but she also joins the **54% of caregivers who are women**, with 30% of them facing a heavier burden—including taking more time off work than male counter parts—and on average putting in 20 more hours per week on caregiver tasks.



Did you know that over **8 million Canadians** provide care for chronically ill or disabled friends and loved ones, with approximately **half caring for their parents or in-laws?** This compassionate support comes with a hefty price. Caring for aging parents **costs Canadians an estimated \$33 billion dollars each year**, and that figure is only expected to increase.

The unexpected financial fall-out

If you're a caregiver like Monica, you may face a multitude of financial challenges while caring for your loved one, including:

- **Lost time from work and wages**
- **Lost opportunities for career advancement**
- **Extra childcare costs**

“Caring for aging parents costs Canadians an estimated **\$33 billion dollars** each year, and that figure is only expected to increase.”

In terms of out-of-pocket expenses, those are estimated to set Monica and other supporters back over **\$3,300 per year**, costing the Canadian economy just over \$6 billion dollars. And what about other expenses to support your parent if they choose to live at home? If you live out of province, these costs can become increasingly burdensome, racking up expenses for flights, rental cars and much more.

Then there's the consideration of **home care costs** if Monica simply isn't able to help her parents by herself any longer. In Canada, home care costs can vary between **\$24 - \$35 an hour**, with **nursing care costing \$60 plus per hour**. Many home care companies set a minimum amount of hours they are willing to come out for. If you have a parent who needs a lot of care at that \$60/per hour price tag, you could be paying upwards of **\$8,000-\$10,000 a month** for day support Monday to Friday—and that may not cover nights and weekends when you still have to provide care.



The value of retirement living

What Monica and her parents need to know is that life doesn't have to be this hard. Many seniors are pleasantly surprised at the community and support a retirement residence offers them. Not only are many levels of care and support available around the clock, so too are delicious and nutritious meals and a network of fellow residents available for socialization and recreation. Many of these factors could help expand the life span of Monica's parents while increasing their joy and well-being—not to mention hers.



So, is caregiving really free?

Like so many, Monica's parents assume that her caregiving is free, but as you can see, that couldn't be further from the truth. She loves her parents dearly and cherishes the time she's able to spend with them, but she wonders how much more valuable their moments together would be if she didn't have to worry about taking care of their home repairs, maintenance, bringing them groceries and cooking most of their dinners. Not to mention driving them to and from their many medical appointments. Monica and her parents don't realize that if these chores and the costs to perform them went away, they'd be free to spend their later years enjoying each other's time and visits.

If you're a caregiver to aging parents and find yourself taking on the majority of their support because you—and they—think of your efforts as “free” or saving money, I urge you to remember that this isn't really the case. Out of pocket expenses, time missed at work, promotions turned down because you don't have the capacity to take on more—these are the true financial costs of caregiving in addition to everything you're investing emotionally, mentally and physically.

About Kelley Keehn

Kelley is a Personal Finance Educator, author, speaker and media personality with over 20 years of experience in the Canadian finance industry. She recently released her 10th book, **“Talk Money to Me”**, and has two audio courses. She serves on many prominent financial committees and has conducted thousands of television, radio and print interviews on a variety of financial literacy topics for a global audience. Her mission is to help Canadians feel good about their money.



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