





**Headquartered in Vancouver, TELUS** is a leading national Canadian telecommunications company with 28,155 employees. TELUS stood out for making it easier for people with arthritis to thrive in their careers, and in the process also improve productivity and reduce costs associated with absenteeism and presenteeism.

TELUS strives for a workplace accommodation policy that minimizes workplace barriers. For example, the company has established an ergonomics program to protect employees from work-related musculoskeletal injuries. In the TELUS employee submission, the employee told ACE that TELUS provided check-in visits, as needed, from an Occupational Therapist to review her health and determine if any further adjustments to her workspace were required. The TELUS employee credits the ongoing review process and subsequent

physical workplace accommodations for relieving her of stress related injuries and possible flare-ups.

TELUS offers a flexible health benefits plan that allows employees to choose the type of coverage that is best suited to their needs, including extended health, dental, health spending account, employee/spouse/child life insurance, and long term disability top-up plan. TELUS does cover biologics and other arthritis medications under its drug plans.

The company's commitment to wellness extends to confidential health counseling services, on-site health screening clinics and the establishment of Wellness Centres at nine locations that offer a range of complimentary services including health screening, blood pressure and cholesterol checks and health events and workshops.



**Every day**, according to Statistics Canada, 14.5 million people go to work at a small or medium-size place of employment. According to the Globe and Mail, small businesses account for about 4.6 million employees – 31% of working Canadians. These employers stand to benefit enormously from having healthy employees, since absenteeism, reduced productivity and other health-related costs cannot be absorbed as readily in small businesses as in large ones.

ACE has recognized the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC) as a leader in the medium size category for its investment in employee health and wellness. Based in Lacombe, Alberta, AFSC is a provincial crown corporation that provides farmers, agribusinesses and other small businesses loans, crop insurance and farm income disaster assistance.

AFSC encourages its approximately 700 full time employees

to balance work and their personal life with flexible work hours, shortened and compressed work week options and a formal earned days-off program that allows employees to earn up to 15 additional days off each year.

Through its healthcare plan, AFSC offers employees coverage for prescription drugs and biologics as well as coverage for naturopathy, physiotherapy, chiropractor, massage, sports therapy and speech therapy. All AFSC employees receive a Health Spending Account to complement existing group benefits and provide employees with greater flexibility to manage health related expenses.

Recognizing the unique needs of older employees, AFSC assists employees with retirement planning courses tailored to employees under and over 45, phased-in retirement work options and generous contributions to a defined benefit pension plan.



**Based in Saskatoon, cfactor Works Inc.**, with 55 full time employees in Canada, is a developer of Vibe HCM solution, a comprehensive Human Resource and Talent suite. cfactor works primarily with mid-to-large enterprises that represent hundreds of thousands of employees across a variety of industries.

cfactor impressed ACE and ARC evaluators with its commitment to mobility and flexibility. For example, its downtown Saskatoon head office was designed through a collaborative process between architects, designers, and employees, which led to features to assist

mobility challenged employees. The head office also has an on-site fitness center with free employee memberships and the company offers healthy food options for purchase at a nominal cost.

cfactor employees are also provided access to ergonomic assessments with specialists to address physical workplace challenges.

The cfactor employee submission rated the company's health and family benefits as very good, citing cfactor's flexible health benefits program and 100% employer paid benefits coverage with no waiting period for coverage for new employees.

## The award selection process

This is the inaugural year of the program recognizing the best arthritis practices of leading companies throughout Canada. There were 72 employers who were nominated representing a total employee population of approximately 140,000.

ACE is recognizing three companies categorized by size: small (1-99 employees), medium (100-500 employees), and large (more than 500 employees). Based on written submissions and interviews with employers and employees of nominated companies, ACE partnered with its scientific partner, the Arthritis Research Centre of Canada, and evaluated entrants using three criteria:

1. Organizational Benefits (e.g. job accommodation, health insurance, reimbursement of prescribed arthritis treatments and services on extended benefit plan, short- and long-term disability benefits, work-at-home policies, job-sharing opportunities, flexible work hours, sick leave/well days off, leave of absence policy, return to work assistance, family leave, child care).
2. Physical Workplace (e.g. workstation/ergonomics, on-site physical fitness facilities, stretch and fitness breaks, bike lockers/showers, healthy food options in cafeteria or vending machines).
3. Employee Education (e.g. newsletters, internet/intranet site, employee counseling, roundtables, blogs and peer support groups).

## Message for Employees:

Communicate and engage with your employer about your arthritis

### The Situation

You're a working person who suddenly finds that you have arthritis. At first, you may deny that the condition is impairing or interfering with your performance on the job (and perhaps in the early phases of the disease that may be the case) but as the disease progresses, you find yourself having more and more difficulty discharging your primary responsibilities. Fatigue assails you; your pain levels rise inexorably; your joints are angry and inflamed. What can you do? You need to work. You have responsibilities to yourself and your family. As well, you didn't check your career expectations and ambitions at the door to your rheumatologist's office. You have always been an achiever who takes pride in being a competent contributor to your workplace. How do you square this circle?

The difficulty in reconciling your disease with

the demands of your working life is often greatly compounded for many people with arthritis because there is very little public awareness about arthritis disease and its systemic impacts on the mind and body. Isn't arthritis just something to worry about when you're old and creaky and ready to retire? That's still the prevailing image. But you're a very long way from checking out living conditions at the "Shady Acres Home for Retired Persons". No, you are most definitely not ready for the retirement home, but at the same time, your disease makes demands upon you that you simply must respond to intelligently—and in many cases if you fail to do so, you may hasten, rather than slow the progression of your disease and speed the day when you may be unable to work at all.

### Good Communication is Vital

Assuming the time has arrived when you may have to seek some form of "workplace accommodation", what steps should you follow and what can you expect? First, clearly define your needs. Then support your request with evidence or information from your doctor or healthcare provider as to your limitations (don't hesitate to seek professional advice or peer-provided information from ACE on any particular points you feel you need to clarify). You may have to request extra sick leave or some extra time off, an adjustment to your daily



or weekly schedule, changes in your work duties, or you may need to secure certain ergonomic modifications in your workplace. If you foresee a need to be absent from work, detail how long the absence is likely to be and whether there may be possibilities of prolongation beyond what is known. You may wish to explore the possibility of working from home—if that is something that is feasible in your job. These sorts of requests are usually considered "reasonable" in most circumstances and most types of employment, but bear in mind that no one size fits all.



### Making it Work: ARC study is looking for participants

Dr. Diane Lacaille and her research team at the Arthritis Research Centre of Canada are in the evaluative stages of a study entitled "Arthritis and Employment: Making it Work". This project addresses the challenges of staying at work by offering information and techniques for managing arthritis while at work.

Currently, this online program is being evaluated in a randomized controlled trial to test its effectiveness at helping people stay employed. Results are due sometime in 2015 or 2016 at the earliest with availability of the program to the general public at some point after that. If the results confirm the effectiveness of the program, the program will go a long way in helping people with arthritis remain

employed, productive and motivated to continue working.

We live in exciting times for arthritis research, and the work of Dr. Lacaille and her team fills a much-needed role in the realm of arthritis self-management and employment. Thanks to this work, coupled with increased awareness of the capabilities of employees with arthritis, more of us will be able to continue working with varying degrees of adaptations and adjustments, providing a win-win situation for both employers and employees alike.

If you have a form of inflammatory arthritis and you are working in paid employment, you may be eligible to participate in this study. To find out more, please contact [info@jointhealth.org](mailto:info@jointhealth.org).

# About Arthritis Consumer Experts

## Who we are

Arthritis Consumer Experts (ACE) provides research-based education, advocacy training, advocacy leadership and information to Canadians with arthritis. We help empower people living with all forms of arthritis to take control of their disease and to take action in healthcare and research decision making. ACE activities are guided by its members and led by people with arthritis, leading medical professionals and the ACE Advisory Board. To learn more about ACE, visit [www.jointhehealth.org](http://www.jointhehealth.org)

## Guiding Principles

Healthcare is a human right. Those in healthcare, especially those who stand to gain from the ill health of others, have a moral responsibility to examine what they do, its long-term consequences and to ensure that all may benefit. The support of this should be shared by government, citizens, and non-profit and for-profit organizations. This is not only equitable, but is the best means to balance the influence of any specific constituency and a practical necessity. Any profit from our activities is re-invested in our core programs for Canadians with arthritis.

To completely insulate the agenda, the activities, and the judgments of our organization from those of organizations supporting our work, we put forth our abiding principles:

- ACE only requests unrestricted grants from private and public organizations to support its core program.
- ACE employees do not receive equity interest or personal "in-kind" support of any kind from any health-related organization.

- ACE discloses all funding sources in all its activities.
- ACE identifies the source of all materials or documents used.
- ACE develops positions on health policy, products or services in collaboration with arthritis consumers, the academic community and healthcare providers and government free from concern or constraint of other organizations.
- ACE employees do not engage in any personal social activities with supporters.
- ACE does not promote any "brand", product or program on any of its materials or its website, or during any of its educational programs or activities.

## Thanks

ACE thanks the Arthritis Research Centre of Canada (ARC) for its scientific review of JointHealth™.



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**Arthritis Consumer Experts™**

Suite #200A 1228 Hamilton Street  
Vancouver BC V6B 6L2  
t: 604.974.1366

**e: [feedback@jointhehealth.org](mailto:feedback@jointhehealth.org)**  
**[www.jointhehealth.org](http://www.jointhehealth.org)**

ACE does not promote any "brand", product or program on any of its materials or its website, or during any of its educational programs or activities.


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## Disclaimer

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**Arthritis Consumer Experts™**  
Suite #200A 1228 Hamilton Street Vancouver BC V6B 6L2

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