



# Returnity YYC

PEER SUPPORT FOR LAWYERS ON PARENTAL  
LEAVE AND RETURNING TO WORK

# Returnity YYC

This 6-month pilot program is designed for lawyers in Calgary on parental leave to support them in what can be a **challenging time as they welcome a baby into their family, and eventually return to work.**

All lawyers in Calgary on/about to go on parental leave (maternity, paternity or adoption leave) are welcome.

Our first cohort ran from January to June 2023, with 22 lawyers and 22 babies.

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# Gaps in the market to support lawyers on parental leave

01

## PATCHWORK OF RETURN TO WORK SUPPORT

There is a patchwork of return to work initiatives in the legal profession. Generally, smaller organizations tend to have less formalized return to work support. This Program is intended to supplement organizations' own return to work initiatives via knowledge-sharing amongst participants from different organizations.

02

## LACK OF SUPPORT DURING LEAVE

While many organizations have their own return to work initiatives, very few focus on the employee's time at the beginning of or during their parental leave. This Program is designed to address that gap via a peer support mechanism.

03

## LACK OF INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC SUPPORT

There are numerous "mom's groups" in Calgary, but none that are targeted towards lawyers. Practicing law generally comes with high and intense work expectations, and lawyers are in the unique position to understand and provide support to each other.

01

## ACTIVITY BASED PROGRAMMING

The first half of the Program is centered around an activity for attendees to do together with their babies. There will be time after each activity for attendees to get to know each other better. Towards the end of the Program, we introduce learning components related to return to work.

02

## BABIES WELCOME/ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND

Programming will mainly be held during the daytime on weekdays and in-person. Event locations will have easy parking, be stroller accessible, with breastfeeding-friendly and diaper changing-friendly spaces.

03

## COSTS

We aim for events to be accessible from a costs perspective. Attendees sign up and pay to attend the events that work for their (and their baby's) schedule. Some participants may be able to have their organization cover their attendance costs as part of their business development initiative.

# How it works

# Example of a cohort's programming

JANUARY 17	AFTERNOON MEET & GREET
FEBRUARY 8	BABY & ME YOGA
MARCH	BABY FIRST AID REFRESHER
MARCH	BABY & ME BARRE
APRIL	PANEL WITH RECENT RETURNEES
APRIL	BABY & ME PHOTOS
MAY	MAKE YOUR OWN RETURN TO WORK PLAN WITH FACILITATOR
JUNE	WRAP UP PARTY

# It's been a huge success!

22

Lawyers who joined our first cohort (Class of 2023)

02

Organizations we formed partnerships with

01

Expression of interest to open a new chapter in Edmonton

35

Lawyers who have signed up for our Class of 2024 cohort, including our first male lawyers

02

New cohort leaders for our Class of 2024 cohort



**UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY**  
FACULTY OF LAW

AWL

ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN LAWYERS (CALGARY)





Now, you have the opportunity to directly support the new parent in your workplace and your industry.



# Why should organizations support and sponsor this Program?

01

## EMPLOYEE SUPPORT & RETENTION

Supporting new parents helps with talent retention and is good for business! They fill an important gap in the talent pipeline for the long-term success of your organization and industry.

02

## DEI TARGETS

Participating in and/or sponsoring Returnity may help meet KPIs or commitments that your organization has made regarding diversity, equity and inclusion.

03

## AUTHENTIC BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

For private practice firms, this is non-traditional opportunity for participating associates to create authentic relationships with in-house lawyers.

# Why does this Program matter for the legal profession?

01

## KEEP WOMEN (AND PARENTS) IN LAW

A [2021 American Bar Association report](#) found that numerous women faced discrimination and lack of support in their organizations once they had children, which contributed to their leaving of their law firm and the profession. This Program aims to provide a bit more support to women to keep them in the profession.

02

## NORMALIZE PARENTAL LEAVE FOR MALES

Male lawyers who do take parental leave may feel even more isolated as there are very few male lawyers who take parental leave. This Program is designed for any lawyer on parental leave, regardless of gender. Our hope is that male lawyers can also use this Program to find peer support from other male lawyers.

According to a 2021 Canadian Bar Association report titled "[Pay Equity in the Legal Profession](#)", encouraging and normalizing parental leave for male lawyers may help to remove gendered stigmas for all employees returning from parental leave.

Please get in touch with us to discuss what partnership between you and Returnity YYC could look like. Our minimum sponsorship ask is \$500.



# Meet your Class of 2024 Cohort Co-Leaders: Allie and Andrea

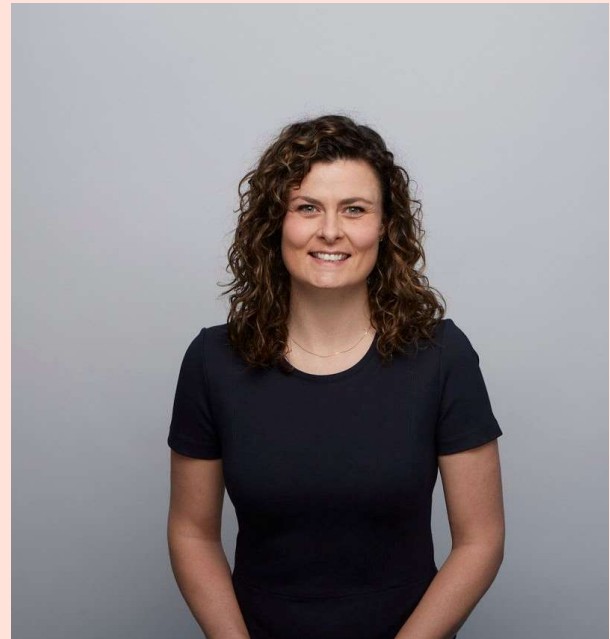
Cohort leaders organize Program events and are participants' main points of contacts if they have Program questions.



# Allie Laurent

Allie Laurent is a partner with McLennan Ross LLP's Calgary office. She practices labour and employment with a focus on employment litigation, human rights disputes and the education sector. Allie has appeared at all levels of court in Alberta.

Allie and her husband welcomed their son Silas in March 2023. Silas is already a world traveller having visited Denmark, Hamburg, Amsterdam and Paris all before he was 4 months old. Allie hopes to carry on the work Kay has spearheaded in giving new law parents a place to connect.





# Andrea MacLean

Andrea MacLean is an associate at JSS Barristers. She has a varied civil litigation practice with a keen focus on defamation actions. Andrea completed law school at the University of Calgary.

Andrea is the mother of two wonderful daughters - born in October 2020 and February 2023. She is excited to help build a community of other lawyer-parents and share tips and tricks to help us all maintain our sanity in both our professional and home lives.



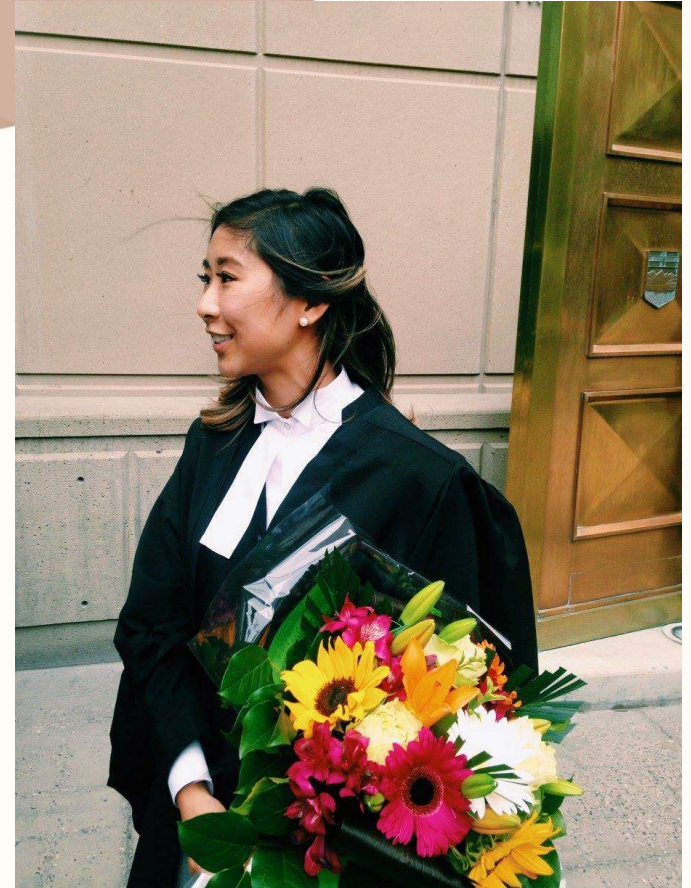
# About the founder:

## Kay She- Johnson

Kay is Senior Legal Counsel at Flair Airlines. Prior to that, she was a corporate associate at Baker McKenzie in London, UK, working in their energy, mining and infrastructure group. She articulated and started her legal career at Bennett Jones in Calgary.

Kay and her husband returned to Calgary while she was on maternity leave. Her happy and always-hungry son, Archer, was born in July 2022.

Kay founded Returnity YYC after finding herself lacking a support network as a new mom with continued ambitions to succeed in law. She found inspiration for Returnity YYC from similar programs in London. It has been a true joy for her to meet other lawyers who are navigating similar parenthood and return to work challenges.

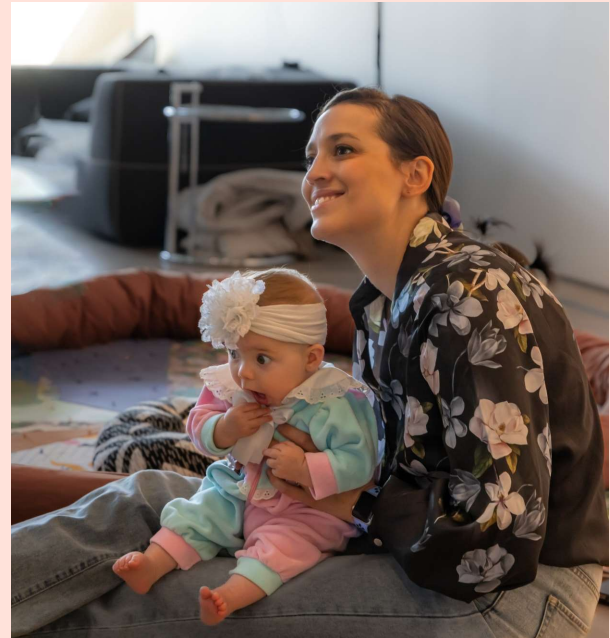




# Testimonial from past participant

“One of the most memorable Returnity YYC events was a panel discussion held with recent returnees to work. Lawyers who had previously transitioned to work spoke about their experiences navigating their return-to-work journey. These discussions were candid and addressed many common insecurities that a new parent might face heading back into a busy legal practice.

I found these discussions to be inclusive, empowering, and reassuring as a new mom. I continue to cherish the memories and friendships created by Returnity YYC, which has given me more confidence and a larger support network as I transitioned back to my own workplace.”



# Thank you!

Photos in this presentation are shared with permission and joy. They also make it impossible for you to say no to anything we ask. Look at those cheeks.

