

Looking Beyond the Surface

An In-Depth Review of Parental Benefits



Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network
Partenariat sur l'économie sociale et la durabilité
Bridging, Bonding, and Building / Renforcement des liens et des capacités



In January 2001, Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) increased the maternity and parental benefits pay-out period to 50 weeks for eligible parents.



The most vulnerable and marginalized women are the least likely to be eligible for benefits under the act.

These women include:

- Teenaged new mothers
- Women with little education
- Low income women
- Single mothers
- Immigrant women
- Visible minority women
- Aboriginal women
- Women with Disabilities

MOTHERS AND EI



WHO IS EXCLUDED?

- Women who do temporary, contract or seasonal work
- Women who work part-time
- Self employed women not eligible at all



Atlantic Consultations and Surveys



Provincial Focus Groups
Equality Seeking Women's
Organizations

Seven Key Messages From Focus Groups:

- **The extension is a positive step; but many parents cannot make use of this resource.**
- **Many parents are either not eligible or find it particularly difficult to take advantage of staying home for a full year.**
- **Access to paid maternity and parental leave plays a big part in decision making about whether or not to have children.**
- **Access to adequately paid maternity and parental leave has impacts on the health of women, children, and families.**
- **Access to adequately paid maternity and parental leave contributes to women's equality in the workplace and in the home.**
- **Parents need more and better information about the benefits that they are entitled to.**
- **There are inequities in the EI system which denies much needed support to many children and families.**

Looking beyond the surface:

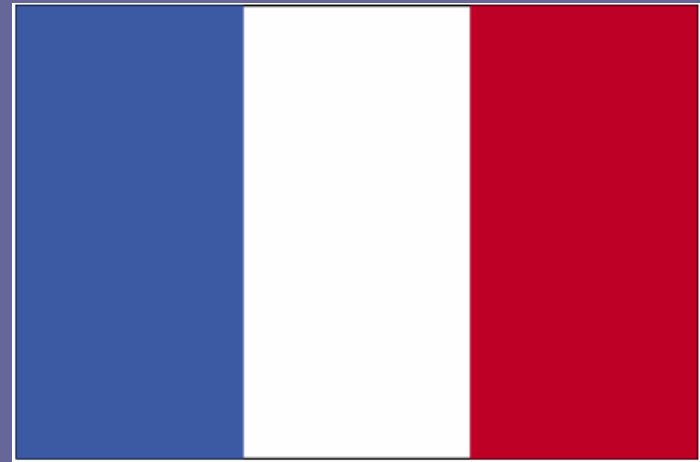
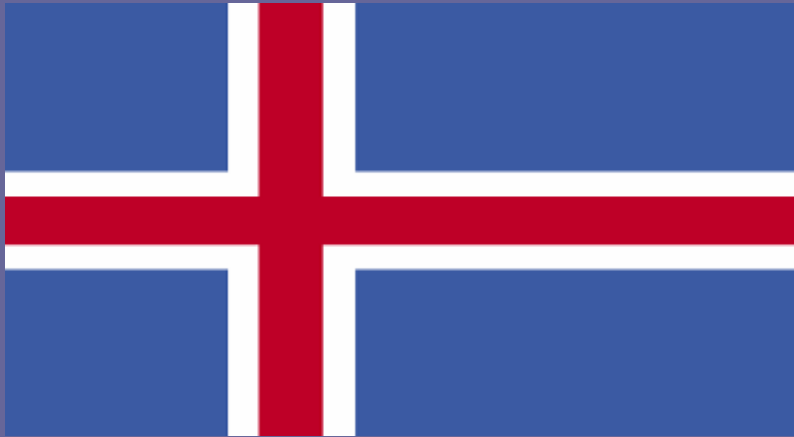
*An in-depth review of **parental benefits***

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International Best Practices



Interim Report



Final Recommendations

- I. Eligibility
- II. Flexibility
- III. Length and Value of Benefits
- IV. Employment Protection
- V. Access to Information
- NATIONAL CAREGIVER STRATEGY

Eligibility

We recommend that the federal government extend eligibility for maternity and parental benefits by allowing an option for parents to “look back” or reach back hours over a three- to five-year period prior to the birth of a child.

Eligibility

We recommend that the federal government extend eligibility for maternity and parental benefits by allowing **self-employed individuals the option** to pay into the Employment Insurance program.

Length and Value of Benefits

We recommend the federal government eliminate the unpaid two-week waiting period, and add an additional two weeks of paid maternity leave.

Length and Value of Benefits

We recommend the federal government improve the wage replacement for maternity and parental benefits by increasing the weekly payable benefits from **55% of insurable earnings to 65% of insurable earnings**, based on the best twelve weeks of earnings in the last three to five years.

Looking Beyond the Surface

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