

Should all employers match the federal government's new 18-month parental leave plan? ^[1]

Cross Country Checkup with Duncan McCue

Author: CBC RAdio One

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DESCRIPTION

It can be gut-wrenching for many new parents — especially new moms. The thought of missing out on baby's every gasp, sneeze and smile because it's time to go back to work.

Well, this week, the Trudeau government made good on it's pledge to extend parental leave from 12 months to 18 months. That doesn't mean more money. New parents who want to more time at home will have to stretch one year of EI benefits over a year and a half. But the government says extended leave gives workers in federally regulated workplaces more options for work-life balance after the birth of a child, and that's good for the economy and business.

Now, you'd think that parents would jump at more time at home with a newborn, but not everybody is pleased with the details.

Critics say it will only benefit women and families who can afford to cover expenses over the extended period, and it'll make it harder for mothers to re-enter their careers after being absent from work for 18 months.

Some daycare advocates point out that extending leave is not the first priority, and what parents really need is more good quality daycare. Does it let the government off the hook of any commitment to increase funding for accessible daycare? Or, will it give parents extra time at home to search for the right care for their children?

The extended leave can be shared by mothers and fathers. Many say that anything that encourages men to take a larger role in childcare is good for everybody especially workplaces where a culture of overwork prevails. Will it help close the gender gap and make workplaces more family friendly?

Small businesses have already spoken out against the extension saying it puts a strain on employers to find and train replacement workers for longer periods.

Or should employers be more accepting of the positives of parenthood that can strengthen an employee's long-term relationship with a company?

The new federal rules for parental leave apply to less than 10 per cent of Canadian workers. What do you think? Should the provinces jump onboard and change their labour laws to extend parental leave to the other 90 per cent? Ontario has already announced it will follow the federal lead.

Our question: "Should all employers match the federal government's new 18-month parental leave plan?"

Guests

Jennifer Robson, assistant professor in the department of Political Management at Carleton University

Corinne Pohlmann, senior vice-president of National Affairs and Partnerships at the Canadian Federation of Independent Business

Marina Adshade, professor at the Vancouver School of Economics at UBC, and at the School of Public Policy at Simon Fraser University, and author of "Dollars & Sex: How Economics Influences Sex & Love"

Denise Donlon, Canadian media executive, author of "Fearless as Possible (Under the Circumstances): A Memoir"

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