

Parental leave needs revamp as government plans for paternity leave^[1]

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Description

While the Liberals consider rounding out their parental leave policy with paternity care, one expert thinks they should restructure the whole system first.

The federal government has reportedly been working on a possible paternity leave plan, but no cost estimates or implementation timeline have been revealed.

Expanded parental leave, new caregiver benefit, to come into effect Dec. 3, as questions remain.

Consultations with social policy professionals have picked up steam since their November announcement to extend leave to 18 months failed to get the intended reaction.

Some new parents were unsettled with the idea of their spreading the same benefits over a longer period of time.

Those issues, and others, need to be addressed in the upcoming plan, Kate Bezanson, a social policy expert from Brock University, told The House.

"The broader system itself needs significant revision," she said.

Time to take a 'serious look' at social policy

Ottawa has begun to apply gender lenses to their policies, but they have yet to turn that focus on families.

"It's not clear that parental leaves in general have been subjected to this kind of analysis and I think now is a really good time to do it," Bezanson said.

By applying that scope to the issue, the government should be able to see where the gaps are, she added.

"When you have a dedicated paternity leave, there are important outcomes," she indicated, mentioning higher family income and longer careers for women.

Getting mothers back into the workforce to help boost the economy has been a stated priority for the prime minister.

"It's time to take a serious look at parental leave and childcare policies," he told the World Economic Forum on Wednesday.

"There's more to do."

Looking to Quebec's paternity policy — the only one in Canada — is a good place to start.

"Quebec has probably the best model," Bezanson said.

Almost 80 per cent of eligible fathers in Quebec took paternity leave in 2014, compared to just over 25 per cent of fathers in the rest of Canada, according to Statistics Canada.

While the government mulls over the details, Bezanson said she doesn't anticipate the cost of implementing the leave will be very high.

There is no indication of when a concrete paternity leave plan could be announced.

-reprinted from CBC, The House

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