

# Adoptive mom wants same maternity leave and benefits biological mothers receive <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

CALGARY — Eight months after her son William was born, Lindsey Salloway's paid parental leave was up. As an adoptive parent, she wasn't eligible for the extra 15 paid weeks that maternity leave would provide.

Now, the Calgary mother is hoping to change those laws.

When her 35 weeks of parental leave came to an end, Salloway made the difficult decision to stay another 15 weeks with her child, without pay.

"I think if my company had told me that I had to, it would have been a very very difficult decision, but I can't imagine I would have been able to go back," said Salloway.

"It was tough ... I'm really lucky that my work allowed me to extend to the full year, but we had 15 weeks where we didn't have any kind of income or insurance or anything coming from me."

Earlier this year, Salloway set out to change the way the laws are structured.

"I reached out to couple (of) people in Parliament ... (Tom Kmiec, Calgary Shephard MP) personally reached out to me and immediately wanted to help as much as he could."

Together the two launched an online petition in May, calling on the government to change how maternity and parental benefits work.

The goal was to get at least 500 signatures by the end of August, when the petition closes. So far they have around 1,500.

Chantelle Beach, a social worker with Adoption Options, said biological mothers in Canada receive 15 weeks of maternity benefits in addition to 35 weeks of parental benefits. Adoptive parents do not receive maternity benefits.

Beach said this poses many issues for adoptive parents.

"Taking the 15 weeks off is a real financial strain, and these people are already having to pay adoption fees," said Beach.

"They also don't have nine months where they're pregnant and bonding with this baby in utero. They are placed with this child, without much notice sometimes, and then they have to bond a lot more quickly, and for the child's sake they could benefit for that extra bonding time."

Salloway said that her and her husband's post-adoption journey has been tough.

After a three-year process, the couple found out they would be the parents of a baby boy in November 2016, a month before he was born.

It was a hectic period, said Salloway. In addition to learning how to care for William, they had to deal with the passing of the revocation period — the time in which a birth mother can revoke the adoption — as well as finalize the adoption, legally change their son's surname and secure a birth certificate.

The anxiety of deciding whether to go back to work early or forgo financial security was also plaguing her. Salloway said that extra 15 weeks is crucial to adoptive parents.

"The explanation I got was that (maternity leave is) for the physical and emotional recovery from childbirth ... I went through a lot of emotional and recovery changes as well," said Salloway.

"It's physical, it's emotional. It's not labour, but there's a lot to it that's exactly the same as being a biological mom."

Salloway said that Kmiec plans to table the petition in the House in September. To add your name, visit [Petition to the Government of Canada — E-1563 Adoption](#).

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