

Sask. government introduce 18-month parental leave option ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

New parents in Saskatchewan will soon be able to take advantage of a 18-month parental leave. The province introduced necessary legislation Wednesday, alongside two other types of workplace leave.

The amended Saskatchewan Employment Act will see maternity and adoption leave options extended an extra week to 19.

The provincial government said this makes Saskatchewan maternity leave the longest in Canada.

On top of maternity leave, parental leave will be extended from 34 to a maximum of 59 weeks for new mothers.

Combined, this brings the maximum leave to 78 weeks, or 18 months.

If another parent decides to take parental leave, or is collecting Employment Insurance (EI) benefits, their maximum leave will extend from 37 weeks to 63 weeks.

Maternity leave is just for a new mother, but the parental leave allotment can be split between partners.

The tradeoff for more time off means a reduced EI payment during the leave.

Maternity remains the same with 55 per cent of your wage capping out at \$547 per week. This extends to a 37-week parental leave.

If the leave is stretched to 18 months, parental leave will pay out 33 per cent of your earnings; with a maximum of \$328 per week.

A new leave was also announced for workers to care for critically ill adult family members. This new leave allows for 17 weeks, or about four months off of work.

"During a major life event, such as bringing a child into the family or assisting a loved one experiencing a serious illness, workers should not have to worry about job security," Labour Relations and Workplace Safety Minister Don Morgan said.

"Some of these amendments were also made to allow Saskatchewan workers to fully access benefits from the federal government."

These first two leave changes are to bring the province in line with federal changes to the EI program.

Labour critic Nicole Sauer said she is glad to see the workplace leave changes coming into effect, but added the province should have gotten in line with federal rules sooner.

"We've been calling on the province to match what the feds have been doing since last session, so that was several months of inaction where people of this province couldn't take advantage of those announcements," Sauer said.

"So we're glad to see it happen, but it's a little slow to the punchline."

The final addition to leave in the amendment is for victims of all forms of sexual violence.

This leave will be added onto provisions allowing for up to 10 unpaid days off work for victims of domestic violence.

This time is to allow for relocation, medical appointments, counselling, dealing with police and court dates.

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