

# 'Keeping a roof over their head and food in their bellies'; New paternity benefit gives options to parents <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS

The federal government has introduced a use-it-or-lose-it paternity leave benefit, allowing some new parents to take extra time off from work.

As of March 17, fathers, same-sex couples and adoptive parents are entitled to take an additional five to eight weeks off, as long as the couple agrees to split the time off to care for a new child.

The federal benefit will cover 55 percent of earnings through employment insurance for those taking 12 months of parental leave, or 33 percent for those opting for an 18-month leave.

Layne Ardell, a father of three from Saskatoon, is on leave taking care of his 11-week-old baby. Although he and his wife, Crystal, are not eligible to use the benefit, it's an option they would have looked into.

"Taking care of your family means keeping a roof over their head and food in their bellies. And I need to be able to pay those bills to help raise my kids. So, if the benefit doesn't pay enough so we can comfortably pay those bills and it would create more stress by taking it, well then I wouldn't."

Money aside, Ardell said this benefit would help parents like himself who have more than one child.

"When you're a parent with multiple children, they need attention just as much too and it'll make a much happier home life if you can figure how to include the whole family in raising that child."

Brian Russell, the provincial coordinator for Dad Central Ontario, said this extended benefit would give fathers the opportunity to be engaged with their kids.

"If they can take those five weeks and spend time with their babies and with their family and get into all the routines, I think it does a whole lot of good for the child's attachment to the dad and the long-term benefits of their relationship," he said.

Saskatoon father Lyndon Thomas plans on using the extended benefit. He and his wife have a two-year-old and another child on the way. The benefit is designed to encourage parents who didn't give birth to take more time off to care for a newborn and allow mothers to return to work sooner.

"If the wife needs to go back to work, wants to go back to work, if she gets paid more and if it helps out the family the most, I'm all for it. But, ideally, to have both parents home putting the influence into the kid is probably the ideal way that we want to live."

Sometimes parents have no other option but to stay home because they can't afford to put their kids in daycare.

The Ardells are already trying to figure out what to do after Crystal's 12-month maternity leave ends.

"It's going to get to the point where it might be better not to go back to work for one of us, whether that was me or could be her," Ardell said. "But, you really have to do your math to figure it out because why pay someone else to raise your kids is part of it, but the other big part of it is, well, I could raise my kids because I can't afford to work."

Federal officials expect 97,000 families to take advantage of the new paternity leave benefit in the next year.

**Related link:**

**Region:** Saskatchewan <sup>[3]</sup>

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/19/03/keeping-roof-over-their-head-and-food-their-bellies-new-paternity> [2]  
<https://saskatoon.ctvnews.ca/keeping-a-roof-over-their-head-and-food-in-their-bellies-new-paternity-benefit-gives-options-to-parents-1.4345199> [3]  
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