

# Helping working parents [CA-ON]<sup>[1]</sup>

The Ottawa Citizen

**Source:** The Ottawa Citizen

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 21 Nov 2008

## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

## EXCERPTS

An Ottawa couple expecting twins has been making national news for their argument that they should get two sets of parental benefits.

The Employment Insurance program allows couples with new babies to receive parental benefits for up to 35 weeks (plus 15 weeks maternity leave). Those weeks can be divided between them, but even for parents of multiples, the combined total can't exceed 35 weeks for each birth.

Christian Martin and Paula Critchley say that since each of them pays into the Employment Insurance program, they should be able to apply as separate claimants, one for each child. Parents with two single children get two sets of 35 weeks, so why should twins be different? They point out that twins need extra care.

It's true that, in a strictly arithmetical sense, the rule is unfair. If these four people were divided a different way -- say, two single parents with one child each -- the EI program would pay out more. But it isn't really about math.

The EI rules allow parents to be with their children up to a certain age, during the early months of late nights and frequent feedings. If the program were intended to make sure that all children get exactly equal amounts of time with caregivers, why not allow best friends and grandmothers to take time off work to help out single parents? And what about parents of triplets or more?

...

However their case turns out, Mr. Martin and Ms. Critchley have brought attention to a neglected area of public policy: the needs of a 21st-century workforce.

Access and affordability of child care was not a major issue in the most recent election. But some politicians have been working to make work-life balance a little easier in Canada.

Conservative MP Gord Brown, who represents Leeds-Grenville, championed a private member's bill in the last Parliament that would provide up to two years of employment-insurance benefits to a parent who stays home to care for a child with a serious illness. And Prime Minister Stephen Harper should make good on his election promise to extend the employment-insurance program, including parental leave, to self-employed people who are willing to pay the premiums.

...

The Conference Board of Canada has estimated that Ontario will face a labour gap beginning in 2014 and growing to a shortfall of 364,000 workers by 2025. It is not in Canada's interest to make life difficult for working parents.

- reprinted from the Ottawa Citizen

---

**Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/08/11/helping-working-parents-ca>

**Links**

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/08/11/helping-working-parents-ca>