

3 lessons from MP Karina Gould's parental leave that could help all Canadian families ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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Excerpts

Federal cabinet minister Karina Gould, leader of the government in the House of Commons, has made Canadian history three times: as the youngest female federal cabinet minister, the first to give birth while holding office and the first to take parental leave. Her approach to parental leave could well translate into her most enduring legacy.

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Lesson 1: Boost eligibility

Not all Canadians are eligible for parental leave. Almost one-third of all Canadian mothers (outside of Québec, which has a more inclusive program) do not receive paid maternity or parental benefits. This is due to many factors, including restrictive eligibility criteria of 600 employment hours in the year before a child's birth.

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Lesson 2: Better wage top-ups

MPs receive 92 per cent of their salaries while on leave. Similar salary top-ups exist in the public sector and some private companies. For most Canadians, however, parental leave is low-paid: only 33 to 55 per cent of wages, with a ceiling of \$401 to \$668 weekly and \$63,200 annually.

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Lesson 3: More flexibility

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The problem with Canada's current system is that leaves must be taken as consecutive weeks in the first 12 to 18 months after a child's birth.

There are other ways to do parental leave. In Sweden, for example, leaves can be taken in one or several blocks of time, in days rather than weeks, on a full or part-time basis, and across several years.

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