

Backlog in parental leave plan almost cleared, officials say [CA-QC]^[1]

Author: Carroll, Ann

Source: The Gazette (Montreal)

Format: Article

Publication Date: 23 May 2006

AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

Goal is handling file within 14 days

There is hope for people waiting for their parental leave benefits to kick in, the Quebec government says.

Customer service agents have almost caught up with the backlog of applications, and the money is flowing, said Claude Morin, spokesperson for the Quebec parental insurance plan.

"Within a few weeks, we expect to reach our objective of settling 95 per cent of the files within 14 days," Morin said.

The new insurance program kicked in Jan. 1. But it bogged down almost immediately under a deluge of customer calls - as many as 30,000 a week - and a mountain of new-parent files to be processed.

Child-care worker Jennifer Tellier said she reached a customer service agent quickly enough in February, after the birth of her daughter, Jenna Paul.

But she waited 2 1/2 hours on the phone when she called back in mid-April to ask about her overdue benefits cheque.

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Morin said parents' interest in the program is not surprising, given the advantages of the revamped plan over the federally-run program it replaced.

The plan is accessible for the first time to self-employed workers, pays higher premiums, and does away with a two-week waiting period to qualify for benefits.

The Quebec-run plan also lets parents choose between a "basic plan" (lower benefits over a longer period) and a "special plan" (higher benefits over shorter time).

The government didn't take into account the flood of calls from parents and parents-to-be who were curious about the program, Morin said. The parental insurance plan fielded 189,000 from Jan. 1 to May 17, more than three times the number expected, Morin said.

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The department is now answering callers within an average of two minutes, and processing at least half the demands for parental insurance within seven days, Morin said.

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About \$120 million has been paid out on 31,601 claims filed so far this year, Morin said. The government expects to remit \$1.8 billion in parental leave benefits in 2006, he added.

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- Reprinted from the Gazette.

Region: Quebec^[2]

Tags: maternity and parental leave^[3]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/06/05/backlog-parental-leave-plan-almost-cleared-officials-say-ca-qc>

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^[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/06/05/backlog-parental-leave-plan-almost-cleared-officials-say-ca-qc> ^[2]

