

Ottawa allows Quebec to run parental leave program [CA-QC] ^[1]

Author: CBC News

Source: CBC News

Format: Article

Publication Date: 1 Mar 2005

AVAILABILITY
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EXCERPTS

Ottawa reached a deal with Quebec Tuesday allowing the province to run its own parental leave program, an agreement more generous than any similar employment insurance-based plan in the country.

The deal signed Tuesday by four cabinet ministers from Quebec and Ottawa will go into effect at the beginning of next year.

The new program will extend benefits to parents who work from home and eliminate the two-week waiting period for getting benefits.

Parents will have two options for the amount of time they take off. Quebec mothers will receive increased benefits and can take either 40 weeks off or 50 weeks off under the agreement.

Mothers can take a larger income for a shorter leave, or they can take a smaller percentage of their usual income for a period just short of a year.

Fathers will also receive five weeks of paid parental leave.

In the federal system, self-employed workers don't get parental leave. But in Quebec, under the new agreement, self-employed parents who are new parents will get paid time off work.

Quebec Family Minister Michelle Courchesne said the program will boost the province's birth rate.

"We feel that this sort of program will definitely encourage families to give birth and maybe have more children," Courchesne said Tuesday.

Recent figures show Quebec's birth rate is up slightly but is still trailing provinces such as Ontario, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta.

The deal affects approximately 80,000 people per year in Quebec.

- reprinted from CBC News

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