

Ottawa advised to expand parental leave [CA] ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

The rules should be more flexible when it comes to work leave for new parents, says a report from two Commons subcommittees.

The two groups, one studying children at risk and the other looking at the problems of persons with disabilities, said Tuesday the present parental leave system doesn't cover a lot of people.

Because benefits are administered under the Employment Insurance Act, self-employed parents and many part-time or low-wage workers don't qualify, the unanimous report says.

The benefit program also covers only 55 per cent of salary.

"Many parents ... are unable to either qualify or financially bear the cost of taking time from work."

The report says the government should look at making it easier to qualify for parental leave.

Bloc Quebecois MPs on the subcommittees suggested the government consider negotiating with the provinces the establishment of parental leave insurance programs.

The report also pointed out that the needs go beyond new parents.

"Parents with children with disabilities and workers caring for elderly, often-disabled, family members also need supports and services that are not available to them," the report says.

"Because Canada has a rapidly aging population, the need for these services and supports will only increase."

The government must address these issues, the report says.

The subcommittees submitted recommendations calling for more study on a number of problems, ranging from jobs for the disabled to help for aboriginal children living in poverty.

-Reprinted from The Toronto Star

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