

Paternity leave in Canada might get much needed revamp ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Parental leave rules in Canada may be about to change and government is hinting that paternal leave may be getting a much needed makeover. Progressives are hoping new laws will expand paternal leave. They say this will not only help take the burden of raising a child off the woman, but give fathers some much needed time with their children.

Canada has relatively liberal parental leave policies throughout the country. In Quebec, fathers get at least five weeks off with 70 percent of their salary in tact. And in the rest of the country parents can split 35 weeks of leave between each other. However, many in government say it's time to improve family policies.

Paternal leave, although on the rise throughout the world, is still rarely spoken about. Most countries, barring the U.S. and Papua New Guinea, mandate paid maternal leave for the mother. However, only 79 have laws on the books regarding the father.

This not only strips men of their time to bond with their new child, but can put an undue burden on the new mother to take on all childcare responsibilities herself. Politicians in Canada are now speaking out on the importance of child rearing becoming an equal effort between parents.

And just south from Canada, in a land where maternal leave laws are considered far behind the rest of the world, parental leave has gotten an unexpected boost from one government sector: the army.

In January the United States Defense Secretary announced that new family laws will be extended to both mothers and fathers. Women, for instance, had their leave time doubled from six to twelve weeks. Meanwhile fathers had their time off extended from 10 to 14 days.

While a paternity leave of two weeks isn't that bad when stacked against some places in Western Europe – for instance, in the U.K., France and Spain, fathers get between 11-15 days of paternity leave – there are new movements underway to expand time off for the father. And progressive countries, recognizing that a family unit should be together after the birth of a new child, are increasing time off.

For instance, in Finland fathers get 54 days to take care of their newborns. In Iceland, father's will get a whopping 80 days off to spend with their child

According to the Economist, there is evidence that the children of fathers who were given ample paternity leave did much better in school. And the benefits did not end there: "According to a study of four rich countries – America, Australia, Britain and Denmark – fathers who had taken paternity leave were more likely to feed, dress, bathe and play with their child long after the period of leave had ended." For women sick of shouldering the lion's share of child rearing, paternity leave could be the answer.

There are also emotional and psychological benefits of paternity leave. One new father over at Dad.info explains how paternity leave helped him to understand his role. "Paternity leave allows for both of you to ease into your new life and changing roles. It's as important for dads as it is for mum to understand what their contribution will be in this new world order."

Further, he notes that many new fathers aren't able to be there for meetings that could help mitigate new parent anxiety. "I was able to overcome my anxieties particularly because I was able to talk through some of them with the visiting midwives in the first couple of days. I also learnt a lot about my child and was able to talk through the next steps with my wife."

Hopefully Canada will extend their paternity leave across the nation – a move that could add fuel to the movement for countries around the globe to start taking fatherhood seriously.

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