

Parental leaves and benefits¹

In this section, any leave from work associated with the birth or adoption of a child is referred to as parental leave unless otherwise specified. It may include maternity or adoption leave for either parent or two parents.

Parental leave provision refers to the terms of an individual's entitlement to job-protected leave from work, such as duration, timing in relation to the birth or adoption, and eligibility for job-protected leave.

Parental leave benefits refers to government-funded financial support for individuals on parental leave.

■ OVERVIEW

[Paid maternity leave](#) for birth mothers was originally introduced Canada-wide in 1972, providing access to 15 weeks of benefits. Ten weeks of sharable parental leave benefits for either parent were added in 1989 and extended to 35 weeks in 2000. In 2017, the federal government introduced the option to extend parental leave benefits for either parent over a longer period (up to 61 weeks). Since 2017, parental leave benefits have seen additional changes, including changes to eligibility, benefit levels, and duration.

Since 2006, Quebec has had its own parental leave system. Today, Canada has two parental leave and benefit regimes: one specific to Quebec and another for the remaining 12 provinces/territories and workers across Canada covered by the Canada Labour Code.² Parental leave benefits and leave provisions for all provinces/territories except Quebec are divided between federal and provincial/territorial governments. In all provinces/territories with the exception of Quebec, parental leave benefits fall under the federal [Employment Insurance Act](#), while provincial/territorial provisions for job-protected leave are established in each jurisdiction's employment standards legislation.

■ CANADA OUTSIDE QUEBEC: BENEFITS AND LEAVE PROVISIONS

Benefits

All parental leave benefits in Canada outside Quebec are paid under the federal [Employment Insurance \(EI\) program](#). Employees and employers both contribute to the EI program.

Until parental leave was amended in 2017, it provided 15 weeks of maternity leave benefits and 35 weeks of payment to cover parental leave for either eligible parent (including adoptive parents), for a total of 50 weeks of benefits.

In 2025, all eligible birth parents may claim maternity benefits. This benefit is for the birth parent only, paid at 55% of insurable earnings (up to \$695 per week) for up to 15 weeks. Either eligible new parent, including

¹ The Canada chapter in *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2025* contributed to the information in this section. (McKay, L., Mathieu, S., Lero, D. S., Tremblay, D.-G., Doucet, A., Raguéd, S., and Thompson, K. [2025] 'Canada country note,' in Dobrotić, I., Blum, S., Kaufmann, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P., and Valentova, M. [eds.] *International review of leave policies and research 2025*. International Network on Leave Policies and Research.)

² Workers under the Canada Labour Code are those employed in federally regulated industries including banks, telecommunications, interprovincial/international transportation (air, rail, road, marine), postal/courier services, broadcasting, and federal Crown corporations. The Canada Labour Code sets national standards for employment conditions such as wages, hours of work, and leaves.

the non-birthing parent and adoptive parents, may also claim one of two options: the Standard Parental Benefit or the Extended Parental Benefit.

Standard Parental Benefits for either parent (including adoptive parents) are paid at 55% of insurable earnings (up to \$695 per week) for up to 35 weeks, or 40 weeks if leave is shared between parents.

Extended Parental Benefits for either parent (including adoptive parents) are paid at 33% of insurable earnings (up to \$417 per week) for up to 61 weeks, or 69 weeks if leave is shared between parents.

While there have been a number of changes since 2017, these remain the main maternity and parental leave benefit options in Canada outside Quebec.

MAIN BENEFIT OPTIONS

Maternity leave benefits can be combined with parental leave benefits to make a total of 50 weeks (standard option) or 76 weeks (extended option).

While the Extended Parental Benefit is paid at a lower weekly rate than the Standard Benefit, the total amount received for both benefits is roughly the same.

In 2025, the maximum insurable earnings are \$65,700 per year, and eligibility requires at least 600 hours of insurable employment within the past 52 weeks.

PARENTAL SHARING BENEFIT

In 2019, the Parental Sharing Benefit [was introduced](#) to encourage parents, including non-birth (second) parents and adoptive parents, to share parental leave. The standard option is five additional weeks of benefits if both parents share parental leave. The extended option is eight additional weeks of benefits if parents share parental leave.

SPECIAL BENEFITS

Self-employed Canadians can access EI Special Benefits, including parental leave, by voluntarily registering with the Canada Employment Insurance Commission. An applicant for Special EI Benefits must wait 12 months from the date of confirmed registration before applying for the EI Special Benefits. Parental leave represents two of the six types of EI Special Benefits (maternity, parental, sickness, family caregiver for a child, family caregiver for an adult, and compassionate care).

A minimum net income of \$8,826 in self-employed earnings in 2024 was required for eligibility for EI Special Benefits.

OTHER ASPECTS OF PARENTAL LEAVE BENEFITS

The maximum amount for EI parental leave benefits is indexed to inflation and increases annually.

Benefits are paid to parents for the allotted periods outlined in the employment legislation for their province or territory of employment.

In 2018, it became possible to receive parental leave benefits while continuing to work. Accordingly, a new parent who is “working while on claim” may earn money while receiving benefits and keep \$0.50 of benefits for every dollar earned, up to 90% of previous weekly earnings. [Working while on claim](#) does not need a

separate application; claimants already receiving maternity and/or parental benefits only need to declare their earnings online.

Benefit payments for maternity leave may begin as early as 12 weeks before the estimated date of birth.

Leave provisions

Outside Quebec, provinces/territories are responsible for the provisions for maternity and parental leave. Leave provisions vary by province/territory, but they are generally consistent with federal benefit provisions (see “Duration of leave entitlements” table below). Although federal benefit provisions may change, parents must still refer to the provisions of their territory of employment.

Workers in federally regulated workplaces must take leave as specified in the Canada Labour Code.

■ QUEBEC: BENEFITS AND LEAVE PROVISIONS

The [Quebec Parental Insurance Plan](#) (QPIP) is also a contributory insurance program. As in the rest of Canada, eligibility for job-protected unpaid leave in Quebec is separate from eligibility for the payment of benefits. Unlike the rest of the country, however, parental leave provisions and payment of benefits both fall under provincial jurisdiction.

In 2020, Quebec made a number of changes to QPIP in new legislation, Bill 51, [An Act Mainly to Improve the Flexibility of the Parental Insurance Plan in Order to Promote Family-Work Balance](#). Additional changes were [introduced in 2021](#).

In Quebec, new parents have two main parental leave options: the Basic Plan and the Special Plan. Each of these main options may include maternity, adoption, and surrogacy benefits as relevant.

Types of benefits:

- Maternity leave benefits: exclusive to the person who is pregnant or has given birth
- Paternity leave benefits: exclusive to the parent who did not give birth
- Parental leave benefits: available to either parent or may be shared by both parents
- Adoption benefits: available to each adoptive parent, plus benefit weeks that may be shared by both parents
- Surrogacy benefits: available to the person who agreed to give birth and each of the parents taking part in the parental project, plus benefit weeks that may be shared by both parents

Benefit options (2025)

The Basic Plan totals 55 weeks of benefits: 18 weeks of maternity leave at 70% of wages, five weeks of paternity leave at 70%, and 32 weeks of parental leave (seven weeks at 70% and 25 weeks at 55%).

The Special Plan totals 43 weeks of benefits: 15 weeks of maternity leave at 75% of wages, three weeks of paternity leave at 75%, and 25 weeks of parental leave at 75%.

Parents who share parental benefits receive additional benefit weeks under QPIP. Under the Basic Plan, an additional four weeks at 55% of earnings is available once each parent has received at least eight weeks of

sharable parental benefits. Under the Special Plan, an additional three weeks at 75% of earnings is available once six shareable parental benefit weeks have been paid to each parent.

Under QPIC, in 2025, maximum insurable earnings were \$98,000 per year. Eligibility requires at least \$2,000 in insurable income during the qualifying period. The Basic Plan pays a maximum of \$1,319 per week, and the Special Plan pays a maximum of \$1,269 per week.

SELF-EMPLOYED PARENTS BENEFIT

Self-employed new parents in Quebec are eligible for paid parental leave. Self-employed workers are automatically covered in QPIP and are eligible for leave once they have stopped working or have seen a reduction of at least 40% of usual income.

ADOPTION AND SURROGACY

Adoption benefits include weeks reserved for each parent and additional shareable weeks. Under the Basic Plan, each parent is entitled to five weeks paid at 70% of earnings, plus 45 shareable weeks. Of those sharable weeks, 13 “[welcome and support weeks](#)” are paid at 70% of insurable earnings, while the remaining 32 weeks are divided into seven at 70% and 25 at 55%. Under the Special Plan, each parent is entitled to three weeks paid at 75% of insurable earnings, plus 37 sharable weeks, which are divided into 12 “welcome and support weeks” at 75% and 25 weeks at 75%.

Surrogacy benefits include weeks for the person who agreed to give birth, weeks reserved for each parent, as well as additional shareable weeks for the parents. The person who agreed to give birth is entitled to 18 weeks at 70% of earnings under the Basic Plan or 15 weeks at 75% under the Special Plan. Surrogacy benefits for parents are the same as adoption benefits, as described in the paragraph above.

MULTIPLE BIRTHS OR ADOPTIONS BENEFIT

Since 2021, QPIP has offered a benefit for multiple births or adoptions. Each parent is entitled to additional weeks of parental or adoption benefits, adding five weeks at 70% of earnings for the Basic Plan or three weeks at 75% for the Special Plan.

SINGLE-PARENT BENEFIT

An increased benefit is available for single parents, including single birth parents and single parents in cases of adoption or surrogacy. Single parents are entitled to five additional weeks paid at 70% of earnings under the Basic Plan or three additional weeks at 75% under the Special Plan.

LOW-INCOME SUPPLEMENT

A family supplement is available for families with net income up to \$25,921 and at least one child under 18. The supplement is added to weekly benefit payments, with the total not to exceed \$695 monthly.

OTHER ASPECTS OF QUEBEC PARENTAL LEAVE AND BENEFITS

There is no waiting period for benefits in Quebec.

Since September 2021, Quebec parents can combine work income and benefits, up to 100% of the weekly income recognized for the calculation benefits, regardless of the type of benefits. This is similar to the working while on claim option available in Canada outside Quebec.

■ DURATION OF LEAVE ENTITLEMENTS

Maximum duration of leave entitlements (unpaid) by province/territory (2025)

<i>PT</i>	<i>Maternity leave (weeks)</i>	<i>Paternity leave (weeks)</i>	<i>Parental leave (weeks)</i>	<i>Adoption leave and surrogacy (weeks)</i>
Federal	17	-	63 ¹	63 ¹
NL	17	-	61	78 ²
PE	17	-	62	62
NS	16	-	77	77
NB	17	-	78 ³	78 ³
QC	18	5	65	65
ON	17	-	61–63 ⁴	63
MB	17	-	63	63
SK	19	-	59–71 ⁵	19 ⁵
AB	16	-	62	62
BC	17	-	61–69 ⁶	61–69 ⁶
YT	17	-	63 ¹	63 ¹
NT	17	-	61 ⁷	61 ⁷
NU	17	-	37	37

Source: McKay, L., Mathieu, S., Lero, D. S., Tremblay, D.-G., Doucet, A., Raguéd, S., and Thompson, K. (2025) 'Canada country note,' in Dobrotić, I., Blum, S., Kaufmann, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P., and Valentova, M. (eds.) *21st international review of leave policies and research 2025*, pp. 126–151. [International Network on Leave Policies and Research](#). Used with permission.

¹ 71 if shared.

² In Newfoundland and Labrador, adoptive parents can also take 17 weeks of unpaid adoption leave, in addition to 61 weeks of parental leave, for a total of 78 weeks.

³ In New Brunswick, parents may take a maximum of 78 weeks leave, including maternity leave and child care (parental) leave.

⁴ In Ontario, 61 weeks are available for birth parents who have taken maternity leave; otherwise, 63 are available.

⁵ In Saskatchewan, 59 weeks are available to the primary parent who took full maternity or adoption leave; 71 weeks are available for the parent who did not.

⁶ In British Columbia, both standard and extended leaves are available. If both parents share standard parental leave, they can receive

up to 40 weeks, but one parent cannot receive more than 35 weeks of standard benefits; if both parents share extended parental leave, they can receive up to 69 weeks, but one parent cannot receive more than 61 weeks of extended benefits.

⁷ In the Northwest Territories, an additional eight weeks are available if leave is shared.