



Improving maternity and parental benefits for mothers (and fathers) outside of Québec:

SUMMARY OF NAWL'S RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Expansion of the current maternity and parental benefits regime under EI

NAWL recommends that the Federal Government expand the current maternity and parental benefits regime under EI and that it finance this expansion through direct contributions to the EI Fund.

Specifically, NAWL recommends that the Federal government:

- Abolish the waiting period for workers receiving maternity and parental benefits;
- Convert this two-week period to a period of eligibility for parental benefits;
- Increase benefit levels for maternity and parental benefits (and all other benefits) to 70% of regular earnings;
- Raise maximum yearly insurable earnings to \$51 748, to be indexed annually;
- Calculate benefits on the basis of the best 12 weeks of income in the last year in all regions of Canada;
- Create a family supplement of \$25 per week for one child and \$35 for two or more children for all EI beneficiaries, regardless of family income;
- Lower the eligibility requirement to 360 hours for maternity and parental benefits;
- Respect a distinct entitlement to maternity and parental benefits so that the right to these benefits is not affected by receipt of regular benefits;
- Designate benefits for fathers and second parents;
- Allow a 3 to 5 year reach-back period to qualify for maternity and parental benefits;
- Extend coverage to self-employed mothers and fathers.

2. Creation of a Universal Support Program

Furthermore, NAWL recommends that the Federal Government create a Universal Support Program that reaches mothers who do not qualify for benefits under EI or receive inadequate benefits under that program. At the same time, NAWL recognizes Québec's right to determine its own social policies and thus to opt out of any such program with full financial compensation, if it so wishes.

3. Updating the *Canada Labour Code*

Finally, NAWL recommends that the Federal government show leadership on the issue of employment standards governing leave and the right to return to work after maternity and parental leave by setting an example through the standards set out in the *Canada Labour Code*.