

Dear HUMA,

I am writing this brief to share my personal story of losing my son, Tristan Dunning Chadwick and to be considered as being a potential witness to speak on the panel to your committee regarding Motion 110. May 30th, 2014 my husband and I lost our beautiful baby boy, Tristan close to term gestation (35weeks). This occurred on my last day of work before I was going to commence my Maternity Leave. This tragic loss caused many struggles for my mental health and caused a lot of pain to my family. Due to my son's passing I was diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder, an ongoing Anxiety Disorder with panic attacks, and partial Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Prior to this loss I did not have any difficulties with my mental health and I was functioning in a healthy manner. Having to face these health issues paired with the loss of my son turned my world upside down. My husband experienced a time of depression and our daughter, Paityn, who was 3years old at the time was traumatized. Since the loss of my son I have been proactive in working towards my mental health becoming stable to assist with my grieving process.

Three months after losing our son we chose to try to get pregnant because I knew if we didn't make the attempt soon that I would become too scared to try to get pregnant again. We were fortunate and became pregnant two months later. During the time I became pregnant I was on sick leave as I was not ready to go back to work due my mental health. When my family physician, psychiatrist and counselors were made aware of my pregnancy it was strongly advised that I did not return to work until I had my baby to protect my mental health and well-being. This was mainly due to the sensitive medical nature of my pregnancy, my emotional well-being and working as a Behavioural Consultant for children. Due to not going back to work during that pregnancy I was not able to reach the requirements that Employment Insurance (EI) required which was accumulating 600 working hours to receive a Maternity Leave claim. In April 2015, I submitted an appeal to the Service Canada Centre to review my Employment Insurance Claim in regards to gaining access to the parental leave portion of my maternity leave that was from my son, Tristan's claim. During that time period I had a meeting with Randy Kamp who was the Member of Parliament for Pitt Meadows, Maple Ridge, and Mission, BC. He assisted me with researching what my rights were and provided me with a letter of support along with my medical team's support letters.

I have always been a hard working citizen and contributing member to society. I had only accessed EI for Maternity Leave purposes for my first child (Paityn Chadwick) and had been a long time contributor to my EI benefits through my employment over the last 16 years (1998-2014). I strongly felt that I had earned my hours of Maternity Leave over the many years I had contributed to EI. In my son's claim I doubled the 600-hour requirement; my total insurable hours put into EI were 1,219. I felt those hours should have counted for a subsequent Maternity Leave claim. The remaining 35weeks (Parental

Leave) of my son's claim I felt should have been awarded to me for my subsequent child due to not being able to return to work at that time. June 30th, 2015 I had my beautiful daughter, Kailey, which was a month after my son's claim expired, May 30th 2015. A Service Canada representative told me that I could not access the 35 weeks of Parental Leave due to the claim expiring. I was told that if I had my daughter before the claim expired that I could receive an extension of three months to my claim. I fought for them to extend the claim deadline as well as not place a time limit on me accessing the funds. Unfortunately, my appeal was denied and I was told that legislation would have to be changed before considerations could be made for situations like mine. This infuriated me and I felt like I was being punished because my son died. It all seemed very unfair and made it very difficult on my healing journey as well as my families. It also posed financial hardship that was not necessary. Even though I did not receive support from EI I continued to work hard on my healing journey by receiving consistent counseling supports, attending classes on anxiety and depression as well as paying for therapeutic supports such as massage therapy and therapeutic yoga. It was important that I worked through my grief in a healthy manner and be able to work my way through it so I could be there for my family. Due to my appeal being denied I ended up having to go back to work when my daughter was two months of age. I felt this was very unfair since I had worked so hard to get my hours in for maternity leave when I was pregnant with my son. I felt like I had been discriminated against because my son died. I felt robbed of being able to have time with my newborn baby and I felt like I had no choice to go back to work.

It has been a passion of mine to face this fight again and help out in changing legislation for future bereaved families. Blake Richards reached out to Empty Cradle Bereaved Parents Society and this is when I heard about Motion 110. I immediately contacted Blake Richards and asked to be a part of this wonderful initiative. I finally felt a sense of hope that our voices will be heard and that my son's passing could play a positive impact in helping future bereaved families in their healing journey. Since then I have participated in two group conference calls with Blake Richards, his team as well as parent advocates and medical practitioners across Canada. I have been actively working on collecting signatures for the Motion 110 petition and have been able to collect over 200 signatures thus far. I was able to have two medical practitioners (Dr. Lampen (Obstetrician and Head of Surgery) and Alexandra Lihou (Registered Clinical Counselor) who were a large part of my healing journey to sign on to be a part of Motion 110 and offer to be witnesses on the panel if chosen.

I would like to see a number of changes be made in legislation when it comes to how bereaved parents receive support during their time of loss and grief.

- That parents are able to automatically receive bereavement leave after the loss of their child. That there is no restriction on the amount of times a family can gain access to this benefit. This support can help ease the financial hardships a family can endure during their loss.
- That families are given access to paid counseling supports in a timely manner

- That parents who have a subsequent child and are not able to go back to work during their pregnancy should be able to gain access to the Parental Leave portion of their past Maternity Claim they were approved for before their child passed.
- That Employment Insurance (EI) allows significant others to be a contact for EI on behalf of the mother who has lost a child. In my initial stages of grief it was very painful for me to even speak about my son's passing. My husband and I had to put in many calls to EI to notify them about the passing of our son so that they could stop the parental leave payment portion of our claim. There were many times where I could not physically speak so I had asked my husband to speak for me and we were told every time that my husband could not speak on my behalf. I felt this to be a cruel and inhumane expectation that was placed upon myself.
- That Service Canada update their website to provide a direct line to call and a list of resources a family can access in their time of need.

Since my son's passing it has been my passion to help other bereaved families during their time of need. After joining the Empty Cradle Bereaved Parents Society in 2014 I quickly signed up to be a Board Member. I attend monthly support meetings to help remember my son as well as be a support for other bereaved families. I reached out to the maternity ward of my local hospital to be a contact for other bereaved parents who have lost a child. My family and I donated a Cuddle Cot to our local hospital in memory of our son, which would allow families to spend extra time with their babies that are lost at birth. I am currently completing another project with the local hospital where I am creating memory boxes that are given to bereaved parents. Being a part of all of these initiatives is my way of honouring my son's spirit and making a positive difference in people's lives. My son did not get the opportunity to take a breath in this life but the impact he has made on mine, my families and the community is more than I could have every imagined. It would be a great honour and privilege if I were chosen as one of the parent advocates to be on the panel and speak to your standing committee in person. Even if I am not chosen I hope that my experiences will assist you in making the correct decision for future bereaved families. Please know that participating in Motion 110 is going to have a positive impact on society. I am excited to see the result of the discussions over these next few months.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me directly at 604-910-5995 or via email at nicole@achievesd.ca . Thank you for taking the time to read my brief.

Kind Regards,

Nicole Chadwick