

SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS STANDING COMMITTEE ON INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY.

RE: CANADIAN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Extend Paid Maternity Leave for Three Months this year due to the Pandemic.

I propose the Canadian Government extend paid maternity leave this year by three months due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Mothers have been completely overlooked while simultaneously having all of their normal supports and programs taken away overnight. This has affected mothers on maternity leave in the following ways:

1. Mother and baby have not had adequate time to bond due to the stress of having other children home on this maternity leave who would otherwise be in school or daycare had they not been closed or had spaces become extremely restricted. Time usually spent bonding with baby is now being used to juggle multiple tasks and chores, care for other children or homeschooling of older children. Or other out of norm concerns related to Covid-19, such as how to obtain masks for her family, or how to get to the grocery store during limited hours or while juggling childcare.
2. Mothers are not getting the opportunity to bond with other mothers in the same stage of life as programs and meet up locations are closed. Even the simple activity of chatting with other moms at a playground or park has been taken away. Many women are at home isolated with a baby and are not being allowed to form normal relationships with other mothers that would otherwise naturally happen while on maternity leave. These bonds are essential to the mother's mental health, and to grow her support network as a new mother.

3. Childbirth has an enormous impact on a woman's physical and mental well-being. Time is needed to rest and recuperate, and eventually to exercise her body for the childbirth ordeal. This time is not available to a lot of mothers on maternity leave due to the closure of schools and daycares, with more children than normal needing the mother's care and attention. Spaces that offer baby and mother classes have been closed by the government.
4. Social distancing has led to many mothers with new babies being isolated at home alone, especially if their partner is still working, leaving mothers without normal supports, such as friends and family visiting. Not only is this essential for a mother's mental health, it is also important for helping relieve the burden of additional household tasks and chores, such as preparing meals. Despite the recent easing of restrictions, mothers have already lost a total of two months of visitors and supports. Due to border closures and restrictions on movement continued by the government, mothers whose family or friends live at a distance do not find the new easing of restrictions any more helpful.
5. The maternity leave experience is one that we will not have many opportunities to have in our lifetime. It is an extremely special and unique time in a woman's life as well as her family and friends' lives. A time that should be full of love and support. The Covid-19 pandemic has led mothers to spend a great deal of their maternity leave alone, worried, fearful and stressed.

I propose the Canadian Government extend paid maternity leave this year for a total of three months.

Respectfully,

Victoria Frizzell, R.N. BsN, Mother on Maternity Leave, Mother of Three.