



## RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

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PETITION No.: **421-02755**

BY: **MR. KMIEC (CALGARY SHEPARD)**

DATE: **OCTOBER 17, 2018**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **ADAM VAUGHAN**

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Response by the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

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SUBJECT

**ADOPTION**

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**ORIGINAL TEXT**

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**REPLY**

The Government of Canada thanks the petitioners for sharing their views regarding Employment Insurance (EI) maternity and parental benefits. The Government of Canada also notes the request to extend eligibility for EI maternity benefits to adoptive parents.

EI is an important social and economic program, helping Canadian workers and supporting an efficient labour market. The program provides temporary income support to workers who are absent from work due to job loss and specific life circumstances, including pregnancy/childbirth and for caring for a newborn or newly adopted child or children.

The maternity benefit provides 15 weeks of benefits and is only available to the birth mother, including a birth mother who places her child for adoption. In effect, maternity benefits are related to childbearing and are intended to protect the birth mother from an earnings loss caused by her physical and/or emotional inability to work or to seek work in the weeks surrounding the birth.

The EI parental benefit is payable to either the birth or adoptive parents following the birth or placement of a child. It is intended to provide benefits while a worker is on leave from work to care for their new child or

children. A Federal Court of Appeal decision confirmed that there is a distinction between birth mothers and adoptive parents due to physiological burdens of pregnancy and childbirth.

As of December 3, 2017, parents can choose between standard parental benefits paid over 12 months or extended parental benefits paid over 18 months at a lower rate. They can be shared among parents who can access the benefits at the same time or one after another. During consultations on EI maternity and parental benefits in 2016, the Government heard from adoptive parents who supported having an extended parental benefit option to have more time to spend with their newly-adopted children.

As announced in Budget 2018, the new EI parental sharing benefit will provide additional weeks of parental benefits when parents share. Parents who share the standard duration option will receive up to 40 weeks, an increase from the current 35 weeks. However, no parent will be eligible to receive more than 35 weeks. Parents who share the extended option will receive up to 69 weeks, an increase from the current 61 weeks. However, no parent will be eligible to receive more than 61 weeks. The Parental Sharing Benefit will be available to eligible parents, including birth and adoptive parents, opposite-sex and same-sex parents, starting in March 2019.

The views of the petitioners will be taken into consideration in our ongoing efforts to improve the EI program.