



RESPONSE TO PETITION

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

PETITION No.: **421-04468**

BY: **MR. RICHARDS (BANFF-AIRDRIE)**

DATE: **JUNE 13, 2019**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **ADAM VAUGHAN**

Response by the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

SUBJECT

Employment Insurance Program

ORIGINAL TEXT

REPLY

The Government of Canada thanks the petitioners for sharing their views and notes the request to create a new 12-week bereavement leave for parents grieving the death of a child.

The Government wishes to express its sympathy to families who have experienced the loss of a child. We know that that the loss of a child triggers an extremely sad and difficult time and has a profound impact on families, regardless of the cause of death.

On June 7, 2019, the Government tabled a response in Parliament to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. The Government welcomed the recommendations of the committee and responded along the key themes of: 1) enhancing information and services for grieving families; 2) reducing financial hardships for parents who suffered the loss of a child; and 3) continuing policy analysis regarding other supports.

1) Enhancing information and services for grieving families in a compassionate way

The Government will continue to improve its support for grieving parents who suffer the loss of a child. For instance, the Government is taking steps to provide service excellence for Canadians. Employees providing service delivery will continue to be trained to recognize and help Canadians who are distressed or facing a particularly difficult situation or event. They will also aim to provide information to help parents and other family members through government processes and programs such as how to report the death of a person, provide referrals to provincial and territorial vital statistics offices to obtain a death certificate, and assist with the completion of forms required to access services.

2) Reducing financial hardships and supporting flexible return-to-work for parents who have suffered the loss of a child

The Government notes that some of the existing benefits, such as the Canada Child Benefit and Employment Insurance (EI) parental and caregiving benefits, are aimed at providing financial support while caring for children or family members and do not continue upon the death of the child. With that in mind, the Government of Canada will make every effort to communicate the end of these benefits respectfully. In addition, in an effort to reduce the incidence and amount of benefits that need to be repaid, federal departments are working with provinces and territories to improve the timeliness of the sharing of death notification information between levels of government.

The Government acknowledges that the grieving process is unique and impacts families differently. For part of their grieving process, EI sickness benefits can be used by eligible parents. This benefit can be used for emotional or psychological distress, including grieving, and is available to eligible working parents for up to 15 weeks when they need time off work following the death of their child.

3) Conducting policy analysis regarding supports for parents who have suffered the loss of a child

The Government recognizes that any future program changes must be based on sound analysis. In order to gain more information on the issues raised in the Report, the Government would need to consider ways to link data collected by different programs in new ways, while safeguarding Canadians' privacy. With all that in mind, the Government will continue to monitor trends and challenges faced by families who suffer the loss of a child based on information it collects and explore comparative research internationally to inform sound policy development

For more information on the Government's response to the committee, please visit here:

<https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/HUMA/report-14/response-8512-421-513>.