



Earl Dreeshen, MP
Red Deer

News Release

MP Dreeshen Highlights Enhancements to Compassionate Care Benefits

May 25, 2015 – Ottawa - Earl Dreeshen, Member of Parliament for Red Deer, on behalf of the Honourable Pierre Poilievre, Minister of Employment and Social Development, today highlighted increased financial support proposed for individuals taking care of family members facing a significant risk of death.

Compassionate care benefits, which are provided through the Employment Insurance (EI) program, are available to individuals temporarily away from work to care for a sick family member with a significant risk of death. Effective January 3, 2016, the proposed enhanced benefit will allow claimants to collect up to 26 weeks of benefits, up from the current 6 weeks. The benefits can also be taken within an expanded period of 52 weeks (up from 26 weeks) and can be shared between family members.

The enhancements being made to compassionate care benefits through Economic Action Plan (EAP) 2015 reaffirm the Government's commitment to helping families receive the support they need as they care for loved ones at end-of-life across Canada and in Central Alberta

Today's announcement is one example of what the Government is doing to help Canadians. To help hard-working families, the Government is also enhancing the Universal Child Care Benefit, introducing the Family Tax Cut and making improvements to the Child Care Expenses Deduction and the Children's Fitness Tax Credit.

Quick Facts

- EAP 2015 proposes to invest up to an additional \$37 million annually to extend the duration of compassionate care benefits from the current six weeks to six months, as of January 2016. Through this enhancement, the Government is ensuring that the EI program continues to help Canadians when they need it most.
- Since March 24, 2013, the Helping Families in Need Act has allowed parents to suspend the payment of their EI parental benefits if they become ill or are injured, and collect EI sickness benefits. They may resume collecting the balance of their parental benefits thereafter, if needed.
- Under EAP 2014, the Government allowed additional flexibility to claimants in receipt of EI compassionate care benefits or EI benefits for parents of critically ill children (PCIC) to convert to EI sickness benefits if they become ill or are injured, and to resume collecting the balance of their parental benefits thereafter, if needed.

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- The Universal Child Care Benefit would increase from \$100 to \$160 per month (totalling up to \$1,920 per year) for children under the age of 6, and parents would receive a new benefit of \$60 per month (up to \$720 per year) for each child aged 6 through 17.

Quotes

“The Government of Canada is committed to supporting Canadian families. The changes we are making through Economic Action Plan 2015 will ensure that families are able to care for their loved ones. I am pleased that families in Central Alberta and across the country will be able to access these enhanced benefits when needed.”

- Earl Dreeshen, Member of Parliament for Red Deer

Associated Links:

- Budget 2015: [Helping Families Make Ends Meet](#)
- To learn more about compassionate care benefits, please visit http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/ei/types/compassionate_care.shtml

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Backgrounder

One of the most difficult times for anyone is when a loved one is dying or at risk of death. The demands of caring for a gravely ill family member can jeopardize both employment and the financial security. The Government of Canada believes that, during such times, Canadians should not have to choose between keeping their job and caring for their family.

Economic Action Plan 2015 proposes to provide up to \$37 million annually to extend Employment Insurance (EI) compassionate care benefits from six weeks to six months. Estimates suggest that up to 6,900 claimants per year could benefit from the enhanced measure.

These changes will allow claimants who are temporarily away from work to take care of a family member with a serious medical condition with a significant risk of death to receive compassionate care benefits for 26 weeks, up from the current 6-week period.

Eligibility for compassionate care benefits remains the same, including the requirement for a medical certificate signed by a doctor attesting to the family member's condition.

Self-employed Canadians can apply for EI special benefits (maternity, parental, sickness, compassionate care and parents of critically ill children (PCIC) benefits) if they are registered for access to the EI program.

This measure will come into effect on January 3, 2016. Claimants who are in receipt of compassionate care benefits at the time of coming into force would be able to benefit from the new provisions and receive additional weeks of benefits.

Additionally, the Government has also proposed amendments to Part III of the *Canada Labour Code* to increase the maximum duration of compassionate care leave up to 28 weeks, and to extend the current 26-week period within which the leave can be taken to 52 weeks. This will ensure that the jobs of employees in federally regulated enterprises remain protected while they avail themselves of compassionate care benefits under the Employment Insurance program.

Through these enhancements, the Government is ensuring that the EI program continues to help Canadians when they need it most.

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