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News & Information from Multiple Births Canada



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Couple Challenging EI Parental Benefits Policy on Multiple Births

Since May 2004, MBC and its Chapters have been actively involved in a 'Call to Dialogue' requesting the Canadian Federal government make changes to the Employment Insurance Program to include the unique needs of multiple-birth families. Our message has been consistent - current legislation does not address the reality of the unique bonding requirements of parents with multiple-birth babies. Parental leave (35 weeks) was initially introduced to allow stronger bonding before the parent's return to work. However with double (or more) demands on the multiple-birth parent, it takes more time to create that stronger bond. After polling our members, in November 2005 we presented the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development with three options for improving parental leave for multiple-birth families.

The history of that effort is [documented online](#) for your review.

Earlier this month, expectant multiple-birth father, Christian Martin, contacted MBC to alert us of what he sees as an opportunity for both parents to request parental leave benefits at the same time. He identified wording in the EI Act that he believes supports his argument. Last week, Christian sent a letter to Human Resources Minister Diane Finley - the Minister responsible for the employment insurance program - outlining his interpretation of the EI Act and explaining why he believes it allows one parent to receive parental leave benefits for one baby, and the other parent to receive parental leave benefits for the other baby. [The letter can be accessed from this link.](#)

News stories in the [Globe and Mail](#) and on [CBC](#) and [AOL](#) tell his story.

As their children are not expected until May, Christian and Paula have not yet made their claims for EI. When they do, should one of them be denied the parental benefit, they plan to appeal the decision. Without a doubt, if they are able to argue their case and win, this would set a significant precedent for all expectant multiple-birth parents in Canada. It would allow both parents eligible for EI parental benefits to be home at the same time, bonding with their babies, and ensuring the newborns get a good start.

To date, MBC has supported Christian and Paula by providing them with details on past advocacy work and preparing them for public response once media broke the story. We will continue to support them by sharing their story, now and as it progresses, with our members and with all multiple-birth families.

Christian believes that there may be other expectant multiple-birth parents in Canada who may be interested in pursuing this approach for their upcoming EI claim(s), and that the challenge and its potential success are best served by multiple-birth families working together. *Both Christian and MBC feel that it is critical to present a consistent message.*

If expectant multiple-birth parents want to consider using this approach, or if you can offer any assistance to Christian in his EI challenge, you can contact him directly at twinElbenefits@gmail.com.

Supporting Multiple Births Together,

Gail

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