

MEDIA RELEASE

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MULTIPLE BIRTHS CANADA DISAPPOINTED BY THE CANADA EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE COMMISSION

WASAGA BEACH, ON. – An Ottawa father of twins was notified today that the Canada Employment Insurance (EI) Commission is appealing a recent unanimous decision by its Board of Referees awarding him parental benefits to care for his twin daughter.

In the decision, announced in mid-September, the referees noted that since the two claimants were making separate claims for separate babies, they were each entitled to make separate 35 week claims, he for one baby and his wife for the other. It was a long-awaited decision for Multiple Births Canada (MBC) which has been in dialogue with the Government of Canada since 2005 regarding the need for revisions to the EI Act for multiple-birth families. This new twist in events has the organization and its constituents, Canada's multiple-birth community, shaking their heads in dissatisfaction. "Stephen Harper's government has touted itself as one that believes in family values, yet when they have an opportunity to do what is right for the babies of multiple-birth parents they fail them miserably. Parental leave was created to allow parents to bond with their new baby, which is a challenge when there are two or more. The Board of Referees got it, but the Federal Government is more concerned about preserving the status quo than they are about what's best for the babies and these families," said Gail Moore, MBC Chair.

MBC began A Call for Dialogue regarding EI benefits at its first National Multiple Births Awareness Day in 2005 at the Dionne Quints Museum in North Bay. MBC leaders presented the request with International Benchmarks on the Parental Benefit practices of other countries to Lucienne Robillard, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. This was followed up with subsequent presentations to his successors Belinda Stronach, Diane Finley, and Monte Solberg. The correspondence and supporting documents can be accessed online at <http://www.multiplebirthscanada.org/english/EIupdates.php>.

There are only about 5,000 multiple-birth deliveries annually in Canada, and some of these parents are not eligible for EI benefits. Conversely, some families are not capable of existing on the reduced income of having both parents on Parental Leave at the same time. Currently, parents can receive EI benefits at 55% of their average weekly insurable earnings up to a maximum weekly amount of \$447. The reality is the second benefit will only be accessed by a small number of parents who make the often financially difficult choice to both take parental leave for varying periods of time, in order to give their newborns the best start possible during one of the most important stages in the life of their babies.

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