

Dear

I am writing to you today to urge you, as our provincial government representative to advocate for all of our Saskatchewan adoptive families by supporting a legislative change to the Employment Insurance Benefits Program. **Adoptive families want the Federal Government to provide an EI Adoption Leave Benefit Program that is inclusive of domestic adoption, private adoption and international adoption and is equivalent to the 15 paid weeks given in the EI Maternity Benefit Program.** I am respectfully requesting that you support a legislative change to the EI Benefits Program which will offer equality for all adoptive families and their children.

While there has been a recent announcement by the Honourable Diane Finley regarding the creation of an EI Benefits Program for Foster to Adopt families - these changes to the EI Benefits Legislation does not appear to fairly represent all families created by adoption. "Fostering - to - adopt" programs do not exist in all provinces. Saskatchewan is one of the provinces which is are exempt from this type of program. In addition, families who adopt domestically will adopt a child who is in the foster care system although they may not have ever been foster parents to the child. **I believe that all adoptive parents are entitled to receive the same number of paid weeks in EI Program benefits as a foster parent or a biological parent and which would be inclusive of domestic adoption, private adoption and international adoption.**

Equality within the EI Benefits Program has been a longstanding issue within the adoption community. As far back as 1988 the EI Benefits Program has had a judicial history with as much as two supreme court cases whereby adopting parents challenged the EI Benefits Legislation. *Under the current Employment Insurance Program, adoptive parents are given 35 weeks of paid leave and a further 15 of unpaid leave afterwards. Under the law, biological parents are given both the first 35 weeks and the latter (for biological mothers) 15 as paid leave.*

In 2010 several of our Saskatchewan MP's were on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development, and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA) to begin investigating Federal Support Measures to Adoptive Parents. Our Saskatchewan representative and Executive Director of the Adoption Support Centre of Saskatchewan Cindy Xavier, along with many other adoption and child welfare experts across Canada made a resounding recommendation regarding Employment Insurance Benefits. They requested that the HUMA Committee put forward a recommendation to the Federal Government to bring parity to the EI Benefits Legislation for adoptive parents by creating a brand new legislation that would be specific to adoptive parents and the equivalent in paid weeks of the current EI Maternity Benefits Program. **The HUMA Committee is now moving forward with their recommendations which will include an Employment Insurance Benefit Program for Adoptive Parents.**

In the best interests of the children in our province I respectfully urge our Saskatchewan government officials to support legislative change to the EI Benefits Program which will offer equality for all adoptive families and their children by providing an Employment Insurance Adoption Leave Benefit Program for all adopting parents that is the equivalent in 15 paid weeks to the Employment Insurance Maternity Benefit Program.

Thank you for considering my request and for your support of the children and families in our province.

Sincerely,