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# news release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Government of Canada supports military families** *Improving access to EI parental benefits is the fair and right thing to do*

**Miramichi, New-Brunswick, April 9, 2010**—On behalf of the Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Mr. Pierre Poilievre, Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, today announced that the Government intends to improve access to Employment Insurance (EI) parental benefits for military families. Tilly O'Neill Gordon, Member of Parliament for Miramichi, spoke about the new measure today.

“Canadian Forces members put their lives on the line for our country, and our government is proud to stand behind them, to assist them and their families,” said Mr. Poilievre at the announcement in Ottawa. “Canada has an obligation to ensure that these men and women have access to the programs and services they need. Extending the eligibility window for these benefits is the fair and right thing to do.”

This new measure would extend the EI parental benefit window for Canadian Forces members who are ordered to return to duty while on parental leave or whose parental leave is deferred as a result of a military requirement. The measure would extend the period in which they are eligible by another 52 weeks.

“This government, like all Canadians, supports Canadian Forces members, and their families,” said O'Neill Gordon. “Canadians have proven themselves among the bravest, most skilled and most successful soldiers, sailors and airmen and women on earth. Canadian Forces members serving under vital and often challenging military operations are unable to take parental leave during their assignment.”

This is the latest in a series of improvements the Government has already made to ensure fairness in the EI program, and to ensure that EI continues to help people better adjust to labour market changes and to balance work and family responsibilities.

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Through Canada's Economic Action Plan, the federal government is helping those hardest hit by the economic downturn by providing longer EI benefits, more efficient service and support for training, while protecting jobs through Work-Sharing agreements. The Government has also frozen EI premiums for 2010 at the same rate as 2009.

Most recently, the Government extended EI maternity, parental, sickness and compassionate care benefits, collectively referred to as special benefits, to self-employed Canadians on a voluntary basis.

This news release is available in alternative formats on request.

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# backgrounder

## *Improving access to Employment Insurance parental benefits for military families*

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Income replacement for life-transition events, such as the birth of a child, adoption, illness, and the care of a gravely ill family member, is a key contributor to the financial security of all Canadian workers. As announced in our Jobs and Growth Budget, this government intends to extend the Employment Insurance (EI) parental benefit window for Canadian Forces members who are ordered to return to duty while on parental leave or whose parental leave is deferred as a result of a military requirement.

Canadian Forces members, including reservists, are eligible for benefits under the *EI Act*, as long as they meet the eligibility criteria. Their eligibility for benefits is the same as for any worker in Canada.

The proposed measure would enable Canadian Forces members, including reservists, who had their parental leave deferred or were ordered to return to duty while on leave due to a military requirement, to access their EI parental benefits. The measure would extend the period in which they are eligible by another 52 weeks.

Parental benefits provide income replacement for up to 35 weeks to biological or adoptive parents while they are caring for a newborn or newly adopted child. Benefits may be taken by either parent or shared between them. If parents opt to share these benefits, only one two-week waiting period must be served.

In our Jobs and Growth Budget, we are also taking steps to make it easier to access EI sickness benefits for immediate family of military personnel who have died as the result of a service-related injury. This would provide recognition of the impact on family members of losing a loved one in service.

Through the Economic Action Plan, the Government of Canada has also implemented measures to support all unemployed Canadians. These measures include providing five extra weeks of EI regular benefits, protecting jobs through the Work-Sharing program, and freezing EI premiums for 2010 at the same rate as 2009 to provide economic stimulus. For more information on these measures, please visit [www.actionplan.gc.ca](http://www.actionplan.gc.ca).

The Government has also temporarily extended EI regular benefits by between 5 and 20 weeks for unemployed long-tenured workers who have contributed to the EI program (paid at least 30 per cent of the annual maximum EI premiums) in 7 of the last 10 years and who have made limited use of the EI program.

Most recently, the Government extended EI maternity, parental, sickness and compassionate care benefits, collectively referred to as special benefits, to self-employed Canadians on a voluntary basis. Further information on this measure is available at [www.servicecanada.gc.ca](http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca).