

**STATEMENT TO THE LEGISLATURE**

**BY**

**THE HONOURABLE STEVE PETERS  
MINISTER OF LABOUR**

**REGARDING  
EXPANSION OF FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE**

**QUEEN'S PARK  
OCTOBER 30, 2006**

***(CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)***

Speaker:

Today, I am pleased to announce that Family Medical Leave has been expanded to allow many more people to take the time they need to care for a gravely ill loved one.

They can do this without worrying about losing their jobs.

Before today, the people who could take Family Medical Leave was limited to a number of immediate family members.

Family Medical Leave can now be taken to care for brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, grandparents, nephews and nieces. It can also be taken to care for certain relatives of an employee's spouse.

Even a close friend who is not a direct family member may now be eligible for Family Medical Leave.

Speaker, this government recognizes that people need assurance that while they are caring for a gravely ill loved one, their jobs will be protected.

By expanding the number of people who can benefit from Family Medical Leave, we are creating a new level of fairness.

Speaker, members will recall that our government introduced amendments to the Employment Standards Act to create Family Medical Leave in 2004 that were subsequently passed by the legislature.

Family Medical Leave ensures that Ontario employees who must take time off work to care for seriously ill loved ones, do not lose their jobs.

Our government is on the side of families who need to support loved ones during their final days.

Now, because we see the benefit in providing this leave, we believe that it is right to make it possible for more Ontarians to qualify for this program.

In doing so, we recognize today's society where family members may be hundreds, if not thousands of miles apart.

We recognize those people who are not in a traditional family situation.

And we also recognize the diversity of today's multi-ethnic society with many groups relying on extended family to support one another.

Speaker, our government understands that many can provide critically important support when illness strikes, not just family.

Under Family Medical Leave, an employee can take up to eight weeks of job-protected leave to provide care or support to a person who has a serious medical condition with a significant risk of death occurring within a period of 26 weeks.

Family Medical leave allows people to better balance their work and family responsibilities similar to pregnancy and parental leaves.

Some employees may also be eligible for the Employment Insurance Compassionate Care Benefit program.

You don't have to look far to see the growing level of employee stress due to work-family conflict caused by an aging population and increasing workplace demands.

Employees are more likely to miss work because of care-giving responsibilities.

Caregivers – we have to recognize – are under stress: Someone they love is gravely ill.

Family Medical Leave provides support to individuals in that time of need.

It is also a positive step for businesses.

Providing job-protected leave supports business by creating a more positive, loyal and productive workforce for employers.

Employers know that family caregiving has a direct impact on workplaces.

We believe in supporting Ontarians during difficult times.

The approaching death of a loved one is one of the most difficult passages in life.

The availability of care from family members will allow many to remain in familiar surroundings for much longer.

They will have the comfort and support of those dearest to them.

This Government is committed to improving the quality of life for the people of Ontario.

This change provides support to even more families when they need it most.

It further strengthens the working relationship between employers and employees.

And it will provide comfort to more people who are seriously ill.

Family Medical Leave is the result of a compassionate government that cares about Ontario families.

The expansion of Family Medical Leave is good for families. It is good for employees and employers. It is good for Ontario.

Thank you, Speaker.