

Leader of the Government
in the House of Commons



Leader du gouvernement
à la Chambre des communes

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0A6

The Honourable Larry Bagnell, P.C., M.P.
Chair
House of Commons Standing Committee on
Procedure and House Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A4

Dear Mr. Bagnell,

It is my pleasure to respond, on behalf of the Government of Canada, to the 48th Report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, entitled “Support for Members of Parliament with Young Children”.

As you know, modernizing Parliament and making it more family-friendly so that it is a place more reflective of Canada is important to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the Government. We believe that the House of Commons should reflect Canada’s diversity by providing a more welcoming environment for parents of young children. In response to his mandate letter, my predecessor, the Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, asked the committee to study this topic.

Our Government has been pleased to work with members of all parties to improve the House of Commons environment for families. For example, as the committee identified in its 11th report, “Interim Report on Moving Toward a Modern, Efficient, Inclusive and Family-Friendly Parliament”, we have collaborated to schedule votes after Question Period as opposed to in the evenings. We also worked together to publish the 2018 House of Commons calendar much earlier than in the past to enable members to plan their schedules and to coordinate it with school calendars.

As identified in Budget 2018, the Government is supportive of, and will work with Parliament on, the recommendations put forward in the committee’s recent report on this important subject. The Government supports the work being done by the House of Commons Administration to make appropriate accommodations for members, and welcomes the role of the Chief Human Resources Officer to ensure that special accommodations are guided by the principles of flexibility, compassion and reasonableness. The Government is pleased that when exceptions are made, that the funds used are publicly disclosed. The Government agrees that the House of Commons Administration should communicate this program to members in as wide

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and thorough manner as possible. The Government also believes that this process should be closely monitored and that a report should be produced quarterly that outlines how often accommodations are made, and if it is a recurring practice.

With regards to the recommendation on changing the travel points system so that a member's dependent children's trips to visit or accompany a parent to Ottawa are publicly disclosed but do not draw from the member's travel points, the Government is supportive of examining this change, and believes that it should be done in a responsible manner that ensures a prudent expenditure of public funds.

The Government will bring forward amendments to the *Parliament of Canada Act* to provide for parliamentarians to take maternity and parental leave.

With regards to the proposal to amend the Standing Orders to formalize the practice of permitting infants being cared for by a Member to be present in the chamber during a sitting, the Government is supportive of this initiative. The Government is also supportive of the recommendations regarding the availability and accessibility of childcare services and family/play spaces in Parliament Hill and issuing parliamentary security cards for members' children.

The Government thanks the committee for their work. I look forward to ongoing engagement with you and the committee on these issues so that we can continue to work together to make Parliament more family-friendly.



The Honourable Bardish Chagger, P.C., M.P.