



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Second Session

Standing Committee  
on  
Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills

Bill 220, Employment Standards (Expanding Bereavement Leave)  
Amendment Act, 2021  
Stakeholder Presentation

Monday, November 1, 2021  
8 a.m.

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**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
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**Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)

Frey (formerly Glasgo), Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC)

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Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)

Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)

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**Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

**Participant**

Aditi Loveridge.....PB-425



8 a.m.

Monday, November 1, 2021

[Mr. Rutherford in the chair]

**The Chair:** Good morning. I'd like to call this meeting to order, the meeting of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills.

My name is Brad Rutherford, MLA for Leduc-Beaumont and chair of the committee. We will start with introductions around the table, starting to my right.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Jeremy Nixon, Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Walker:** Jordan Walker, Sherwood Park.

**Mr. Long:** Martin Long, West Yellowhead.

**Ms Rosin:** Miranda Rosin, Banff-Kananaskis.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Good morning. Chris Nielsen, MLA for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Koenig:** Good morning. I'm Trafton Koenig with the Parliamentary Counsel office.

**Ms Robert:** Good morning. Nancy Robert, clerk of *Journals* and committees.

**Ms Rempel:** Good morning. Jody Rempel, committee clerk.

**The Chair:** Going online, we'll start with MLA Sigurdson, please.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Good morning. Lori Sigurdson, Edmonton-Riverview.

**Mr. Dang:** Good morning. Thomas Dang, Edmonton-South.

**Mrs. Frey:** Good morning. Michaela Frey, Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Member Irwin:** Janis Irwin, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

A few housekeeping items to address. Direction from the hon. Speaker Cooper is that members are to be wearing masks in the committee room unless you are speaking and to maintain an appropriate amount of physical distance between each person at the table. Microphones are operated by *Hansard* staff. Committee proceedings are being live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Assembly TV as well. Those participating by videoconference are asked to please turn on your camera while speaking and mute your microphone when you're not speaking. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent.

On to the approval of the agenda. Are there any changes or additions to the draft agenda? Hearing none, can I get a motion to move the agenda? Thank you. Mr. Nielsen has moved that the agenda for the November 1, 2021, meeting of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills be adopted as distributed. Any other comments to that? Then I'll just call the question. All those in the room in favour, please say aye. All those opposed in the room, please say no. Moving online, all those in favour, please say aye. Anyone online that is opposed, please say no. That motion is carried.

Approval of the minutes. Members, we have the minutes of our last meeting to review. Are there any errors or omissions to note? If not, would a member like to move a motion to approve the minutes?

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** I'll move that motion.

**The Chair:** Thank you. MLA Nixon has moved that the minutes of the October 26, 2021, meeting of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills be approved as distributed. Any other comments to that? Then I'll call the question. All those in favour in the room, please say aye. Anybody in the room opposed, please say no. Moving online, all those in favour, please say aye. Anyone online opposed, please say no. Hearing none, that motion is carried.

Moving to the review of Bill 220 with stakeholder presentations, in the meeting of October 26 the committee agreed to invite stakeholders to provide oral presentations of Bill 220, the Employment Standards (Expanding Bereavement Leave) Amendment Act, 2021. According to the committee's agreed upon process for stakeholders, they may make a presentation for up to five minutes, followed by up to 15 minutes of questions. We'll now be moving to the one stakeholder who has agreed to join us this morning, Ms Aditi Loveridge, the owner of Pregnancy Loss Healing and the founder of the Pregnancy & Infant Loss Support Centre.

I want to thank you for joining us this morning and presenting today. You have five minutes to make a presentation, and that will be followed 15 minutes of questions. Please go ahead.

**Aditi Loveridge**

**Ms Loveridge:** Thank you so much for inviting me and giving me this opportunity to speak on Bill 220. It's an absolute honour.

One in four families – that is one in four Albertans – will experience a loss on their path to parenthood. While miscarriage and stillbirth impact so many, the support offered in places of employment is deeply lacking. Bill 220 is a really good first step to help build awareness, decrease stigma, and begin to change the narrative around loss. Having miscarriage and stillbirth included and named in bereavement leave helps society understand that not only does this happen, but it can be deeply impactful for many and it deserves a space to process without the risk of job loss. It helps bereaved families know that their loss is valid and real, two things that are currently underacknowledged. This can help the disenfranchised grief around pregnancy loss to come out of the shadows. It also helps employers to offer something tangible as a way of support. When families feel adequately supported in their workplaces, they show up in their jobs better, creating loyal employees and thus helping the economy.

Bill 220 will allow a safe space for employees who have had a miscarriage or stillbirth to have their loss acknowledged by their employer and define their experience as their own. It acknowledges that a loss at six weeks versus 18 weeks both deserve support as needed. Oftentimes families who have experienced early loss feel that they need to push through; what this bill does is that it validates that loss is loss if a person defines it as such and gives them permission to take the time needed.

As I said, Bill 220 is a good first step, and in my professional and personal experience more needs to be done. Three days is simply not enough time. For some the physical part of a loss can take three days or longer. For my cofounder, Danyelle Kaluski, once she found out that her daughter had died at 38 weeks gestation, it took three days from being induced to birthing her daughter still. For myself, when I experienced an ectopic pregnancy, my physical recovery lasted much longer than three days, and the mental and emotional healing came after. Three days is a start, and it's simply not enough.

When an employee returns to work, more education and awareness is definitely needed to help employers adequately support this deeply meaningful and complex journey. When an

employee returns to work, the need for compassionate care and understanding does not end. The sensitivity training on what to say, what not to say can be extremely meaningful. As experts in this area the Pregnancy & Infant Loss Support Centre are more than happy to work with both bereaved families and their employers to ensure effective and meaningful support is offered to bereaved families navigating loss. With financial support from the government we would be able to provide training to employers to educate them on how they can better support an employee who has lost a baby. We have seen a big gap for a central location of resources and information for employees and their employers to help all affected by loss.

In Ontario Bill 141 provided funding that allowed the Pregnancy and Infant Loss Network, the leading community organization in Ontario, to become the central hub for all miscarriage and stillbirth-related resources and community support. This streamlined service between hospitals, communities, and employers, ultimately providing more adequate support to those experiencing loss and ensuring that no one was without resources. As the primary pregnancy and infant loss community organization here in Alberta we can do this for Alberta, leading the way among other provinces and increasing capacity in our health care system.

I would also invite change to the language in Bill 220 as it needs to be clearly defined. The word "parent" is unclear. This bill is about the birthing person and the birthing person's network. There should be inclusionary words such as "surrogacy" and "adoption" as not all birthing persons are parents.

As I've said numerous times, Bill 220 is a good first step. It's an incredible first step, and our community is extremely grateful to have it brought forward. This bill and our collaborative discussion today is a nonpartisan issue. Loss knows no party lines, and Bill 220 shows collaboration between all parties for the betterment of those navigating loss in this province. Our community thanks you deeply for wanting to further the support of our community.

Thank you for having me today.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much for the presentation.

We will now move to 15 minutes of questions. Just looking to the room for who would like to start.

**Member Irwin:** Mr. Chair, I'd like to start.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Just before – Member Irwin, you'll be first up – MLA Rehn, if you want to just introduce yourself for the record, please, since you just joined.

**Mr. Rehn:** Pat Rehn.

8:10

**The Chair:** Thank you.

MLA Irwin, you're up for a question, please.

**Member Irwin:** Wonderful. Well, first of all, just great to see you again, Aditi. I have to tell you, just to make you blush a little bit, that we definitely had some multipartisan, bipartisan love for you in the last committee meeting. I think it's great that we can agree upon how important it is, the work that you do, you and your organization. Thank you so, so much.

You touched on this a little bit, but can you maybe just elaborate a little bit more, just telling us more about what pregnancy loss is? Can we understand it to be both planned and unplanned? Perhaps just some of the many effects across these kind of losses: you know, physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, and so on.

**Ms Loveridge:** Yeah. The first question: what is pregnancy loss? Pregnancy loss is a death of a baby or fetus, an unborn baby or fetus at any point in pregnancy. That can include miscarriage, which is a loss under 20 weeks. That can include molar pregnancy, chemical pregnancy, ectopic pregnancy. Then there's stillbirth, which is a loss over 20 weeks, and that can include termination for medical reasons, stillborn, and abortion.

Can you please repeat the second question?

**Member Irwin:** Absolutely. I know I threw a lot at you in one question. Just, you know, the physical, mental, spiritual: what sort of effects happen to someone? I know the experience is not universal.

**Ms Loveridge:** Yes, and thank you for saying that. The experience is definitely not universal. I think what's really not talked about enough and not identified enough is how deeply impactful it can be for some. When it impacts those that are impacted by it, it affects every aspect of somebody's life. We're not just talking about a loss when we're talking about grief over here; we're talking about that it affects relationships. It affects our behaviours. It affects our spirituality. If we were faith based, do we believe in that faith? Do we believe in God? If we weren't faith based, what do we believe in now? It affects our mental health, our emotional well-being. No matter the circumstances under which that loss happened, there is some emotion and some complexities that come from it. Whether it was a planned pregnancy, unplanned pregnancy people experience impact to some degree, and that impact deserves to be supported.

**Member Irwin:** Great.

Can I have my follow-up, Chair?

**The Chair:** Yes. Go ahead.

**Member Irwin:** Perfect. Yeah. My follow-up – I think you actually mentioned it offhand there – would late termination and pregnancy loss through abortion be covered by this bill?

**Ms Loveridge:** My hope is yes. This goes back a little bit to that language piece that I was suggesting, of having the language a little bit more clear so that that is included: termination for medical reasons, or TFMR as it's known in this community, and abortion. We see a lot of people that need support after those experiences. If that is not included in this bill, there will be a lot of people, a big number of our community, that are left unsupported. Those folks who are in those two kind of categories already find themselves without support. The TFMR community in particular, who are navigating termination for medical reasons, will contact us and say: can we get support from you? When people do that, my heart breaks because they already are dealing with so much shame and guilt and spiritual and emotional and mental health impacts. The fact that they think that we don't provide that service is deeply heartbreaking because everybody deserves support who's experiencing loss.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Member Irwin.

MLA Nixon, go ahead.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Aditi, for joining us here today and for your compassionate work for so many people that need that. I didn't realize it until my wife and I started to work on having our own children and our friends and our network and just how prevalent these challenges are in our community and how hard it is. Thank you for your work.

With that said, I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit about your experience in supporting people through this challenging time

and kind of how society has changed and the perspective has changed. Maybe if you could speak a little bit to the challenges that you see with employers, whether or not they're willing to work with people experiencing this loss or if you're still experiencing some challenges and lack of understanding for it.

**Ms Loveridge:** Yes. Thank you for that question, a really good question. I'm sorry; my dog is barking in the background, so I'm going to do my best here.

Yes. You're right. I think the conversation around pregnancy loss has definitely changed. It's starting to become more of an upfront conversation; however, we are seeing so much lack of support from employers. A big chunk of our work is actually working with our community to help them. How do I speak with my employer? How do I speak with coworkers? How do I actually ask for this time off? Am I entitled to time off? All of these questions. I don't think it's for a lack of desire on the employer's part of how to do that; from what I'm seeing, it's that employers deeply want to support their employees because employers know that when employees are supported, they're more loyal, they show up at work better. It's simply for them having a lack of understanding of how deeply impactful this experience can be and what support from an employer actually looks like. So I think that that's where my suggestion of having an organization like ours actually go in and offer the service to HR departments and employers to arm them in how you can do this I think would be so meaningful for this community and for employers because I see that the desire is there; it's just really a lack of understanding and the steps on how to actually implement it.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Awesome. I appreciate that.  
Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Did you have a follow-up?

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** No. I think she's pretty well covered it. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Perfect.  
Any other questions?

**Ms Sigurdson:** Yeah. MLA Sigurdson here. I put a question request on the chat.

**The Chair:** Okay. Not overlooked. Please go ahead. You're up.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you. Thank you so much for your presentation this morning. You did refer to this in your remarks, and I just wanted to give you an opportunity to expand a little bit. This bill is suggesting that three days is how much is available. You know, that is a start, absolutely, but we know that New Zealand, for example, has three days paid leave. Quebec has three weeks unpaid leave. In your opinion, you know, how long is enough? What are sort of the range of supports that are needed for the person experiencing pregnancy loss and her or his or the person's supports?

**Ms Loveridge:** That's a tough question. I think that – you're absolutely right – three days is not enough. Each journey is so individual. I think that three weeks ideally, in my opinion, would be a much better time. Three weeks would allow the physical part to at least have happened and some emotional and mental healing to start to begin. I think a part of the discussion, too, that needs to happen is that when we're talking about pregnancy loss and the impacts of pregnancy loss, it's not only this acute grief stage that needs to be supported; oftentimes the second and third year postloss

are even harder than the first year, so anniversaries such as the date of death, the birthdate: those need to be supported as well, not to say that three weeks at that time is what is needed but some acknowledgement from employers that time off to acknowledge that this is the one-year anniversary of the death of a child would need to be implemented, in my opinion.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Okay.

May I do a follow-up, Chair?

**The Chair:** Yeah. Please go ahead.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Great. Okay. Also, something that we did discuss last week with the sponsor of the bill, MLA Walker, was about, you know, that the person who's experiencing pregnancy loss may receive support from not necessarily the person who maybe created the child. It could be, like, someone's mom, or it could be a lot of people, so sort of expanding that piece a little bit so that those people, you know, who are the real supports for the person experiencing pregnancy loss: just if you want to talk about that a little bit.

**8:20**

**Ms Loveridge:** Yes. Thank you. At the centre what we offer is a space for support for all people impacted by this loss. That includes the birthing person, partners, grandparents, siblings. I think those support networks, those natural support networks often get forgotten, but they are also impacted. They're holding space for the person and the partner who have experienced a loss. Then, how do they support them adequately? How do they support themselves? Last week, to end Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month, we actually held a free workshop for supporting others through loss. We had people attend who are those support networks. Midwives showed up. They're looking for tangible tools on how to support. That goes back to what I was saying of having a central hub of resources where people can come and actually access that easily.

I think what families and their support networks need is honestly systems that are working together: health care workers, government, community organizations that are working together to get this information to the people that need it so that people are not having to google and look through. It's very difficult as a grieving person or someone who's supporting a grieving person to start to navigate Google and find out what resources are there. It'd be nice to have that centralized resource available for families and their support people.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Anyone else with any questions? MLA Nixon, go ahead.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Perfect. Thank you, Chair. Actually, just building a little bit off that and talking about how government can work with you and other organizations that provide similar support, I wonder if you can expand a bit. Obviously, this bill is a great first step, as you've noted, in helping to address grief and support for people going through pregnancy loss. How else can we be working? Do you have any other recommendations on how government can work with you and community to help address this concern?

**Ms Loveridge:** Yes. If I look back to Bill 141 in Ontario, what that bill did is that they basically funded this community organization, so they work in partnership with Sunnybrook hospital to get resources out to the community. It allows Sunnybrook hospital to focus their work on what they're good at, which is the medical piece. Then PAIL, the Pregnancy and Infant Loss Network in

Ontario, takes over when those people start to engage back into the community, when they start going back to work, when they start to try and conceive, are pregnant again, and getting them involved with their peers in the community. Funding is obviously a huge issue because we're supporting people that are undersupported. Funding is always an issue, as you know, for community organizations.

Then, I think, working in partnership to build that awareness that oh, you know, there is this really reputable place that is an expert in this field and having our information distributed and found out in a way that is taking some of that guesswork off of the grieving families. I think that's probably the two most important pieces in working together with government.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Perfect.

**The Chair:** You have a follow-up? No?

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** No. Thank you.

**The Chair:** No follow-up.

Any other questions for Ms Loveridge?

Okay. Hearing none, I want to thank you again for your presentation and your time this morning, including the time to answer our questions. Sounds like you are a resource and someone to turn to in your expertise on this matter for many people in this room. Thank you for your work as well.

**Ms Loveridge:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** We will now be moving on to deliberations. The committee will now begin its deliberations on Bill 220. At this time the committee must decide whether to recommend that the bill proceed or not proceed and may also consider observations, opinions, or recommendations with respect to Bill 220. With that I will open up the floor to questions or comments. Member Irwin is flagging me down, so you will start. Please go ahead.

**Member Irwin:** Thanks so much, Chair. Again, I would just like to thank Aditi and her fantastic organization for the work that they do. You know, I'm glad that this bill is quite all-encompassing in a few ways. I think actually maybe it's the teacher in me that really appreciates the opportunity for some education in this bill. I think we learned – I know I learned – a number of things even just around inclusivity of our language: birthing person and very much moving away from gendered terms and other terms.

Like I said, I think that's a really important opportunity just to talk about, you know, the range of experiences, that no experience is universal and the fact that pregnancy loss can happen in so many different ways – miscarriage, stillbirth, abortion, termination, and so forth – so I think it's a really good opportunity for dialogue to destigmatize experiences for folks.

Yeah. I certainly want to support this bill moving forward, you know, with the caveat that there were a number of questions and concerns raised, including around the three days' leave and around some of the language, as I discussed earlier.

With that, I will allow other folks to weigh in on the deliberations. Thanks.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Member Irwin.

Anyone else in the room? Mr. Nielsen. Go ahead, sir.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Yeah. Thanks, Mr. Chair, and also thank you for that presentation. I must admit that I was rather, well, quite frankly shocked when she gave me that statistic of 1 in 4. I really had no idea, and, you know, even trying to, I guess, grasp what's going on

with an individual during that time, as someone whose child had multiple medical challenges growing up and things like that, I still cannot connect with what it must be like, so I guess I always keep coming back to around the leave and how can we eliminate as many stressors as possible so that an individual, so that a family can come together and focus on trying to get through that challenge.

You know, my hope is, as I think the Assembly looks back on the *Hansard* transcript of this meeting, that it will take very seriously into consideration: are there other leaves currently available that we can move this into that will increase that level of support, be it more time, paid leave? When I see that 1 in 4, not everybody can just afford to take time off in a crisis, so when you look at it and you go, "Well, I can't afford to take it off so that means I have to work," but then you're either not getting the support or you're not giving the support that's needed, which just exacerbates the problem.

My hope is that we can look at ways to make this bill even stronger. Of course, you know, that's going to take the work of the Assembly to be able to get that done, and I'm certainly looking forward to hopefully maybe getting a chance to participate in that.

I would certainly recommend to other members that this proceed and that, you know, we give very, very serious consideration of where this could best fit so that it provides the most benefits and relieves as many stressors as possible so that people can focus on getting through such an incredibly difficult time in their lives.

**The Chair:** Thank you for those comments.

MLA Rosin, go ahead.

I see Ms Sigurdson. You'll be just after MLA Rosin.

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Chair. It seems today as though we have bipartisan and community and stakeholder support for the compassionate efforts that this bill is aiming to accomplish, so at the will of the committee I would be happy to put forward a motion for this bill to proceed to the House.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that. I will go over some wording, and you can just let me know if that's what you're hoping to have moved, that MLA Rosin move that

the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills recommend that Bill 220, Employment Standards (Expanding Bereavement Leave) Amendment Act, 2021, proceed.

You're happy with that? Okay. We have the motion.

Any other questions or comments to that motion? MLA Sigurdson, did you want to go ahead?

**Ms Sigurdson:** I just was going to say sort of before the motion came forward – I don't know if it fits with where we are in the process right now. I mean, my suggestion was that maybe this could be actually under personal and family leave to allow for more inclusive and flexible support for the person who has experienced the pregnancy loss. I mean, we've moved on to this position. I think that that's perhaps not quite in order right now. Let's just talk about the motion. I'm fine with that going ahead.

**8:30**

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you.

Any other questions or comments to the motion?

Hearing none, then we will call the question as moved by MLA Rosin. All those in favour in the room, please say aye. All those opposed in the room, please say no. Moving online. All those in favour online, please say aye. Anyone opposed online, please say no. Thank you.

That motion is carried.

Now we'll be moving on to requesting a draft report. Members, the committee obviously just concluded its deliberations on Bill 220 and now should consider directing research services to prepare a draft report, including the committee's recommendations. Would a member like to move a motion to direct that research services prepare a committee draft report? Mr. Nielsen has moved that the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills (a) direct research services to prepare a draft report on the committee's review of Bill 220, Employment Standards (Expanding Bereavement Leave) Amendment Act, 2021, which includes the committee's recommendations, and (b) authorize the chair to approve the committee's final report to the Assembly on or before noon, Wednesday, November 3, 2021.

Was that the wording that you were hoping for, Mr. Nielsen?

**Mr. Nielsen:** Chair, it amazes me how you were able to just pull those words right out of my head.

**The Chair:** Thank you. I learned a lot from our previous chair, who had the same talent.

Any questions or comments to that motion?

Hearing none, I will call the question. All those in favour in the room, please say aye. Anyone opposed in the room, please say no. Moving online. All those in favour of the motion, please say aye. Thank you. Anyone opposed to the motion online, please say no.

Hearing none for that, the motion is carried.

Thank you.

Moving on to other business, does anybody have any other business to raise at this time? Mr. Nielsen, go ahead.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Just for timelines here, I sense that maybe some of my colleagues might want to make, I guess, suggestions to the House to consider about what other leaves we could consider maybe moving this to. Maybe the best place to put that would be in a minority report, I'm thinking. When would a due date for that be?

**The Chair:** Ms Rempel, do you have a suggestion on that?

**Ms Rempel:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think 4:30 tomorrow we could probably work with.

**The Chair:** Any other questions for other business or comments? All right.

Hearing none, the next meeting will be at the call of the chair. Can I get a motion to adjourn, please? Mr. Long got my attention first. MLA Long has moved that the meeting be adjourned. All those in favour in the room, please say aye. Anybody opposed in the room, please say no. Moving online. All those in favour, please say aye. Anyone online opposed, please say no. The motion is carried, and the meeting is adjourned.

Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 8:34 a.m.]





