

Parliamentary reply by DPM Teo Chee Hean on mandatory maternity leave for female employees

**THIRTEENTH PARLIAMENT OF SINGAPORE
WRITTEN ANSWER
MONDAY, 8 MAY 2017**

Mr Sitoh Yih Pin:

To ask the Prime Minister whether the Ministry has plans to review and increase the length of mandatory maternity leave for female employees.

Mr Teo Chee Hean (for the Prime Minister):

The Government is strongly committed to supporting Singaporeans in their aspirations to marry and raise families. Leave is one of the range of measures to support parents to better manage their work and family commitments.

Legislated leave provisions have been progressively enhanced over the years to strengthen this support. In particular, paid Maternity Leave was increased in 2004 from 8 weeks to 12 weeks, and this was further extended to 16 weeks in 2008.

We have also increased leave provisions to encourage fathers to play a more active role in caring for their children. Most recently, we have legislated 2 weeks of Paternity Leave from 1 January 2017, and from 1 July 2017, Shared Parental Leave will be raised to 4 weeks from 1 week currently. This will give working parents more flexibility to decide on the allocation of leave that best suits their caregiving needs.

The Government will be testing the viability of longer parental leave through a pilot scheme in the public sector. At the recent Committee of Supply debate, we announced that the Public Service will provide an additional 4 weeks of unpaid infantcare leave per parent, to be taken within the child's first year. The pilot will last for 3 years, to allow us to test the impact of longer parental leave in a variety of work settings, and assess whether a nation-wide rollout is practicable in future.

Given these recent enhancements, we do not plan to increase our legislated leave provisions for parents, including mandatory Maternity Leave, at this point in time. This is to give employers more time to adjust to the leave provisions which come into effect this year.

At the same time, employers and co-workers play important roles in shaping a family-friendly workplace culture. Employers can tap on various resources to do so, including the WorkPro Work-Life Grant administered by the Ministry of Manpower, which provides up to \$160,000 to help companies defray the costs of developing, piloting and sustaining flexible work arrangements (FWAs). Employers can also refer to the Tripartite Advisory on FWAs published by the tripartite partners, which guides companies and supervisors along the journey of introducing and sustaining FWAs in their workplaces.