

Protected But Not Safe: Pregnancy Discrimination Remains a Reality for Canadian Women

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Toronto, ON – Pregnancy discrimination persists as a significant problem in Canadian workplaces, with an alarming number of women experiencing sudden job loss or diminished opportunities during this pivotal stage of their lives. Although legal protections exist for pregnant employees and new mothers, the reality is that discrimination remains an ongoing issue.



Pregnancy-related terminations

Andrea, a 34-year-old marketing manager in the tech industry (name changed for privacy), illustrates pregnant employees' obstacles. Following a supportive first maternity leave, during which she received only Employment Insurance without additional employer benefits, Andrea returned to work, newly pregnant with her second child, only to encounter an unwelcoming environment.

Comments like, "Oh, you're pregnant again?" and a sudden shift in managerial attitudes culminated in her termination at eight months pregnant. Without the financial means to wage a lengthy legal battle, Andrea settled for significantly less than she believed she deserved.

Unfortunately, Andrea's experience is not isolated. In 2021, a study by "Moms at Work" surveyed 1,090 Canadian women who took maternity leave in the past decade and found that 33% faced discrimination related to pregnancy or motherhood. Some experienced poor treatment or demeaning remarks, while others, like Andrea, were laid off entirely. This issue was recently highlighted in a high-profile case where a former Canadian Google employee sued the company for wrongful termination due to pregnancy.

“Pregnancy-related dismissals are illegal but continue to persist,” says [employment lawyer Jared Lecker](#), Senior Associate at Lecker & Associates. “We want to protect women’s rights to cultivate a family and ensure they don’t have to worry about their job security when starting one.”

Cost concerns often deter pregnant employees from seeking legal counsel. Lecker notes that reputable [employment law firms](#) frequently operate on a contingency basis, meaning clients don’t pay upfront legal fees. “It’s beneficial to have someone in your corner who can guide you through the process and fight for what you’re owed,” Lecker adds.

[Pregnancy-related terminations](#) are a clear violation of employment rights, causing significant stress for mothers juggling work and family. Legally, it's comparable to ignoring a stop sign in a school zone. The repercussions can be substantial, including financial losses, emotional distress, and even job reinstatement. Despite these risks, some employers persist in flouting the law.

A common question is whether employees should inform their employers about their pregnancy. Lecker advises that transparency is crucial. Without employer awareness, pursuing a pregnancy-related discrimination claim becomes difficult.

This issue underscores the importance of understanding one’s rights and the legal protections in place. While employers should uphold these laws, employees must know how to safeguard their interests. Consulting with an employment lawyer not only levels the playing field against financially powerful companies but also ensures that no one is forced to compromise their family’s future due to unfair termination.

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