

# Compassionate Leave

## **FROM THE ADid You Know?® E-MAIL SERIES PROVIDED BY THE NOVA SCOTIA UNION OF PUBLIC & PRIVATE EMPLOYEES**

If a family member is seriously ill, you have some new options for getting time off from work. In January 2004, it became law in Nova Scotia that an employer is required to give you up to eight weeks off work to care for a family member who is likely to die within the next six months.

An employer is not required to pay you during the eight weeks of leave. However, under new federal legislation, you can receive up to six weeks of Employment Insurance benefits. Most NSUPE Locals will try to negotiate top-up during their next rounds of collective bargaining.

To be eligible for compassionate leave, a medical doctor must certify two things: 1) that a family member is at risk of dying within 26 weeks; and 2) that the family member requires care and support.

The family member who is ill must be a spouse (including common law spouse), parent (including in-laws) or child (including step children). Care and support is defined as meaning providing psychological or emotional support, or arranging for care by a third party, or directly providing or participating in the care.

And what if eight weeks of leave isn't enough? In such compelling circumstances, most employers are willing to give you sick leave or an unpaid leave of absence. If you need help getting compassionate leave, call a NSUPE representative.

NOTE: The ADid You Know?® series is general information only. For advice specific to your workplace or personal circumstances, please contact a union representative. Comments are welcome at [nsupe@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:nsupe@ns.sympatico.ca).