

January 14, 2021

Board of Health
City of Toronto
boh@toronto.ca
councillor_cressy@toronto.ca



Dear Councillor Cressy and members of the Toronto Board of Health:

Re: Item HL25.3– Response to COVID-19 - January 2021 Update

We are pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the five recommendations made to the City of Toronto by the Medical Officer of Health on January 5, 2021. The Toronto & York Region Labour Council fully supports each of them. Collectively they cover public education on vaccines, workplace transmission, and the disproportionate impact COVID-19 continues to have on marginalized communities. We ask the Board of Health to recommend their adoption by Toronto City Council.

We also offer additional advice to make the MOH's recommendations more effective in achieving the goal of reducing COVID transmission and helping Ontarians stay healthy.

The government of Ontario's just-announced "Stay Safe All Day" campaign is obviously insufficient to address workplace-based transmission. It offers only inspections and educational materials, and suggests workers make use of the federal government's income support program when so many health experts say workers need employment-based sick leave and pay to offer them the security they need to get tested and to isolate.

Recommendation 2, which requests provincial resources and funding for training temporary workers regarding PPE and infection measures, is sound. We recommend additional provincial government regulation to restrict temporary workers to single workplaces, ensuring that sufficient hours and wages are offered to provide these workers with a living wage. This reduces the opportunity for inter-establishment transmission.

With respect to Recommendation 4, we believe more paid sick days are required, but think five in regular circumstances and ten during an emergency are a good start. Additionally we recommend that the emergency paid sick leave provisions be clearly communicated in multiple languages to workers and employers, that the illegality of retaliation or repercussions by employers when employees act on their rights be explicit in those communications, and that a streamlined complaints process against repercussions be implemented.

We urge you to accept the Medical Officer of Health's recommendations and to go beyond them by accepting our additional advice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "SJMurray". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Susan McMurray
Executive Assistant