

January 14, 2021

Sent Via Email

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Toronto Board of Health

Paul Ainslie, Councillor
Brad Bradford, Councillor
Joe Cressy, Councillor
Mike Layton, Councillor
Gord Perks, Councillor
Kristyn Wong-Tam, Councillor

Dear Board Members,

Re: Support for paid sick days

The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic grow increasingly dire for Ontarians, including frontline workers, each day. This pandemic has shone a spotlight on the structural deficiencies in Canada's social infrastructure, glaring gaps in legislative standards and deep-rooted inequities.

On behalf of the 160,000 Unifor members who live and work in the province of Ontario, including more than 40,000 in the Greater Toronto Area, I urge you to support the Medical Officer of Health's recommendation that the province grant workers access to up to 10 paid sick days, each year.

As the Board is undoubtedly aware, our union and community partners continue to advocate for fairer and more equitable labour laws in Ontario and across Canada. The absence of paid time off the job for workers who are sick is a major gap in provincial labour and health standards, and has been for decades. The failure of politicians to address this gap, meaningfully, in the course of this pandemic is unconscionable.

In past months, the opinions of leading health experts have coalesced behind paid sick days as a key policy lever to limit the transmission of COVID-19. Workplaces continue to pose a significant risk of outbreak, creating vulnerabilities for workers. At highest risk are precarious workers in public-facing and low-wage service jobs, many of them women and workers of colour, who can ill afford to forego a day's pay if experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.

Federal efforts to address these labour standard gaps through the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit, while well intentioned, are limited and inflexible. Provinces must step up, and quickly, to rectify this deficiency for now but also as a matter of rational work and health policy in future.

I want to thank the Toronto Board of Health, and its staff, for serving the public well during this difficult time. Your advice and guidance is a stabilizing force for those of us navigating this extraordinary crisis on a daily basis.

A strong vote in favour of Dr. de Villa's report recommendation pertaining to paid sick days is another show of strong, progressive leadership needed in this time.

Sincerely,



Naureen Rizvi
Unifor Ontario Regional Director

NR/ja:cope343

CC: Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario - premier@ontario.ca
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