Employment Standards

There are 14 different employment standards jurisdictions in Canada (provincial, territorial, and federal rules):

- Alberta, has five unpaid job-protected leave days for personal and family responsibility, if the worker has been with the same employer for at least 90 days. For workers in quarantine, or other long-term illness or injury situations, they can take up to 16 job-protected weeks off unpaid, provided they’ve been with the same employer for 90 days. This exceeds the Employment Insurance benefit length by one week in recognition of the waiting period.
- In Ontario, employees are entitled to three unpaid sick days per calendar year (down from the previous government’s allowance of 10 days entitlement with two days paid).
- Paid sick days in PEI: if a worker has been with an employer for more than five years, you are entitled to one paid sick day, three unpaid. If a worker has not been with an employer for more than five years, you can receive three unpaid sick days after 3 months of service.
- Yukon has up to 12 days unpaid sick days per year.
- Quebec has two paid days if certain conditions are met (three months uninterrupted service, and up to 26 weeks unpaid sick days).
- BC, Manitoba, and Nunavut have no paid or unpaid sick days.
- Gig economy or independent/dependent contractors’ sick days are a case-by-case basis, but generally no support.

Employment Insurance

Employment Insurance benefits can be provided with up to 15 weeks of financial assistance for medical reasons (like quarantine) to a maximum benefit of $573/week. In order to qualify, workers need a medical certificate to show that they’re unable to work, show that their earnings dropped by more than 40%, and have at least 600 hours or work before the claim. There is a one-week wait period before a worker can start receiving Employment Insurance benefits. On March 11, Prime Minister Trudeau announced that the federal government would waive the usual one-week waiting period for these benefits in the case of quarantine.

Evidence that Paid Sick Days Slow the Spread of Disease

A 2010 United Nations’ World Health Organization (WHO) paper concluded that, “Paid sick leave plays a crucial role especially in times of crises where many workers fear dismissal and discrimination when reporting sick.” And, “gaps in paid sick leave result in severe impacts on public health.”

https://www.who.int/healthsystems/topics/financing/healthreport/SickleaveNo9FINAL.pdf

A paper published in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health found that, “Employment that does not offer paid sick leave is plausibly linked to worse health outcomes including a higher risk of mortality, including through reducing one’s earnings and job productivity.”

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5664748/