

February 16, 2021

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Bldg Rm 281
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1
Sent via email: premier@ontario.ca

Dear Premier Ford:

Re: Paid Sick Leave as a Public Health Measure

Current pandemic conditions have brought to the forefront the urgent need for paid sick leave as an effective public health measure to decrease transmission of the novel coronavirus COVID-19. In her recent report, Dr. Teresa Tam, Canada's Chief Medical Officer of Health, states that differential exposure rates are linked to factors such as "the inability to work from home, access to sick leave, job security, reliance on childcare outside the home, etc."¹

Nationally, Statistics Canada reports that approximately 58% of Canadians do not have paid sick leave.² In Ontario, approximately 30% of workers are vulnerable workers in precarious employment, often described as temporary, part-time or contract and without benefits.^{3,4} This type of employment is often found in essential service locations such as grocery retail and personal support services in hospitals and long-term care facilities. Workers in many of these locations may be at high risk of exposure due to the nature of their work. Without paid sick leave vulnerable workers may decide to go to work if they become ill as they need the work income to pay bills.

A Private Member's Bill was introduced by MPP Peggy Sattler in the Ontario Legislature on December 8, 2020, the *Stay Home If You Are Sick Act*, which will provide permanent paid sick days for Ontario workers during the pandemic and beyond. This legislation, Bill 239, can be accessed here: www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/bills/parliament-42/session-1/bill-239.

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The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit Board of Health join the Association of Local Public Health Agencies, the Ontario Medical Association, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario and Boards of Health across Ontario in encouraging the Provincial Government to support paid sick leave for Ontario workers, including providing necessary funding, fiscal relief, and other supports needed by employers for the provision of paid sick leave.

Thank you for considering our recommendations.

Sincerely,

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

Doug Malanka
Chair, Board of Health

cc: Minister Christine Elliott
Minister Steve Clark
Peggy Sattler, MPP, London West
Loretta Ryan, Association of Local Public Health Agencies

References:

1. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/corporate/publications/chief-public-health-officer-reports-state-public-health-canada/from-risk-resilience-equity-approach-covid-19.html>
2. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2018412-eng.htm>
3. https://files.ontario.ca/books/mol_changing_workplace_report_eng_2_0.pdf
4. https://pepso.ca/documents/pepso-glb-final-lores_2018-06-18_r4-for-website.pdf