



February 22, 2021

The Honourable Doug Ford  
Premier of Ontario  
Legislative Building, Room 281  
Queen's Park  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier Ford:

### **Mandatory Paid Sick Leave for Ontario Workers**

The Windsor-Essex County Board of Health (WECHU) supports the introduction of paid sick leave during the COVID-19 pandemic. The WECHU is urging the Ontario government to introduce paid sick leave as an essential component to the legislated emergency unpaid leave currently available under Regulation 228/20. We also urge that the Ontario government provide funding to assist employers to encourage employees to follow pertinent public health measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, as well as all infectious diseases, outlined in Bill 239, *Stay Home if You are Sick, Act 2020*.

As Ontario struggles to contain the second wave of the coronavirus, the lack of paid sick days for Ontario workers is only adding to the number of cases, leaving many individuals in the position of having to choose between going to work when they are sick, or lose the income they need to feed their families.

More than half of Canadian workers do not have access to paid sick leave through their employers, according to a [report by the Decent Work and Health Network](#). That number rises to 70 per cent among people making less than \$25,000 a year and, according to the data, individuals earning less than \$30,000 per year are 1.9 times more likely to contract COVID-19 and 2.7 times more likely to be hospitalized with COVID-19 compared to the rest of the population.

Guaranteed sick days are imperative to help prevent people from attending their place of work while having symptoms of COVID-19, causing a significant barrier to pandemic management efforts. People need to be able to stay home for their health and the health of others, and should not have to choose between income and wellbeing. This is unacceptable in 2021, and Ontario workers deserve better.

Recent modeling projections by the province's public health officials notes that Ontario will not be able to control the virus without the safety of paid sick days.

Under this recently proposed Bill, workers can take the time they need to get well while also helping to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The Bill would guarantee 10 personal emergency leave days per year for every worker, seven of which are paid, without a doctor's note, along with an additional 14 paid sick days during an infectious disease emergency. This would go a long way in Ontario's efforts in preventing the spread of the virus.

The Windsor-Essex County Board of Health endorses Bill 239 and encourages all levels of government to consent to this Bill.

Sincerely,



Gary McNamara  
Chair, Board of Health



Theresa Marentette  
Chief Executive Officer

Christine Elliott, Minister of Health  
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ministry of Health & Long Term Care  
Association of Local Public Health Agencies – Loretta Ryan  
Ontario Boards of Health  
WECHU Board of Health  
Corporation of the City of Windsor – Clerk's office  
Corporation of the County of Essex – Clerk's office  
Local MPP's – Percy Hatfield, Lisa Gretzky, Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls  
Local MP's – Brian Masse, Irek Kusmeirczyk, Chris Lewis, Dave Epp