

January 11th, 2020

The Honourable Monte McNaughton
Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development
Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development
14th Floor
400 University Ave.
Toronto, ON M7A 1T7

Dear Minister McNaughton,

This year Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) marked 100 years of working on the front lines of relief, development and peace initiatives in Canada and around the world. MCC began in 1920, by helping families affected by war and famine in southern Russia (present-day Ukraine). Now as we celebrate our Centennial we urge our own government to respond to the current pandemic with the necessary rights and resources all workers need to live in community with health and dignity.

As a leader in the Living Wage movement and as a non-profit charity that has implemented paid sick time for all salaried employees, MCC Ontario appeals to you not only as advocates, but as proven leaders in shaping just and compassionate communities. Paid sick time is essential for all workers and particularly lower income workers. As Executive Director of Mennonite Central Committee Ontario, I urge you to immediately legislate the permanent implementation of 10 paid sick days for all workers regardless of sector or industry.

In October of 2020 Dr. Theresa Tam, the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada, released a report calling for an equity approach both to understand COVID-19 and to take action. As Dr. Tam wrote, “workers in low-income occupations are working in jobs that put them at greater risk; this is particularly true for women, immigrants, and racialized workers. These disadvantages include economic and employment insecurity, a lack of paid sick leave, and the need to work multiple jobs to make ends meet.” A number of our program participants across the province would fall into this category.

What this pandemic has highlighted is that employer paid sick days for all workers in fact benefits workers, employers and communities. The ability to take sick time with the assurance that wages will be paid increases compliance to COVID restrictions. Meanwhile public health is risked every time a worker is forced to ignore symptoms and arrive at work for fear of losing their livelihood. Paid sick days also benefit employers as contagious disease are more readily isolated, preventing the negative financial impact on employers from a compromised workforce. The ability to respond and attend to symptoms also allows employees to return to work faster and curtails increased absenteeism for long term

sickness. Paid sick days keep communities safe from the transmission of disease and the economy moving.

In response to this issue our Federal Government has recognized the critical need for paid sick time for their employees and implemented 10 paid sick days. This is a positive first step, however MCC's concern is that in this time when leaders proclaim "we are all in this together", 70 per cent of low-wage workers do not have access to paid sick days. It is time for our provincial leadership to legislate that all workers receive the improved opportunity for health and security that is made available through paid sick days.

Sincerely,



John Head
Executive Director
Mennonite Central Committee, Ontario

C.C. Doug Ford, Ontario Premier
Christine Elliot, Ontario Health Minister
Paul Calandra, MPP Markham-Stouffville
Andrea Horwath, MPP Hamilton Centre
Gilles Bisson, MPP Timmins
Jeff Burch, MPP Niagara Centre
Mike Harris, MPP Kitchener-Conestoga
Laura Mae Lindo, MPP Kitchener Centre
Suze Morrison, MPP Toronto Centre
Rick Nicholls, MPP Chatham-Kent-Leamington
Jennifer Stevens, MPP St. Catharines