

Legislate Paid Sick Time!

FEBRUARY 4, 2021



Paid sick leaves save lives. The evidence for this is so clear during the pandemic, resulting in unity among unlikely allies including public health experts and advocates, mayors, progressive business groups and the labour movement. They call for the Ontario government to implement paid sick days so all workers can take paid time to be tested, isolate while they await test results, or quarantine if diagnosed with COVID-19. They have been saying this for months now.

We know that people are going to work sick. During the stay-at-home order, frontline workers are still encouraged to go to work. Many have jobs where they are likelier to get COVID, to be paid less and have few or no benefits, no paid sick time, and precarious job security. They can't access vaccines. Getting food on the table doesn't pause if they need to take time off work.

Doug Ford's Conservatives repealed paid sick days soon after their election in 2018, along with other roll-backs to Employment Standards. This was a huge bonus for some of the wealthiest corporations in Canada, taking millions out of the pockets of employees and reducing safety during the pandemic.

At the Federal level, the NDP forced the inclusion of sick benefits into COVID relief plans. In the face of growing pressure, Ford deflects responsibility by saying workers can use the federal benefit. But experts and those workers who access the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit know there are shortcomings in the benefit, especially for those who live paycheque to paycheque. You take time off, apply for the benefit, but can not use it for periods of one or two days, might be eligible or not, and have to wait weeks for the money to be paid if eligible. Finally, the CRSB is a temporary solution.

It is clear we need permanent, legislated paid sick days for all workers in this province. Fortunately, the necessary legislation has already passed first reading. The Ontario NDP's Bill 239 would provide workers with 7 paid sick days and an additional 14 paid sick days during public health outbreaks.

On February 4, 2021, the Labour Council resolved to:

- Call on the provincial government to implement paid sick days immediately by passing Bill 239 to provide seven permanent days, and an additional 14 days during public health outbreaks
- Call on the provincial government to reconvene the legislature immediately to pass this legislation and other key initiatives to address the pandemic
- Call on the City of Toronto and York Region governments to continue pressuring the provincial government for legislated paid sick days
- Call on affiliates to educate their members about the reality of the Ford Conservatives agenda and support the paid sick leave campaigns of \$15 and Fairness, Decent Work and Health Network, and the Ontario Federation of Labour
- Call on the federal government to enhance the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit