

December 14, 2020

Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau. P.C., M.P.  
Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Hon. Doug Ford  
Premier of Ontario  
Legislative Building  
Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau and Premier Ford:

**Re: Federal and Provincial Support for Adequate Paid Sick Day Benefits**

On behalf of Region of Peel Council, I would like to thank you both for your leadership on the response to COVID-19. We appreciate your past and ongoing support of the Region of Peel to control the spread of the virus and keep residents safe, including economic and financial supports to businesses and individuals that have been directly affected by the pandemic.

Despite the current economic and financial supports, more must be done. Peel remains in 'Lockdown', the most restrictive stage of Ontario's COVID-19 response framework and continues to face challenges in our efforts to prevent transmission of COVID-19. One area we have identified that should immediately be enhanced is paid sick day supports for workers who have COVID-19 or need to isolate because they may have been exposed to the virus. Insufficient paid sick days, financial/income supports, and sick leave protection are known barriers to compliance to COVID-19 control measures, including testing and self-isolation.

This challenge is particularly evident with workers who are in precarious employment and are most likely to not have paid sick days. These include low-income workers, essential workers, contract and agency workers, those who cannot work remotely, and many health-care workers. Some are precariously employed in our transportation, service and manufacturing sectors, which are reported to have some of the highest share of COVID-19 cases among occupation categories. Due to the lack of paid sick days, many of these workers simply cannot afford to take time off work when sick, fearing income-loss and financial hardship.

Peel Regional Council does acknowledge that both of your governments have implemented measures to encourage and support workers to comply with pandemic control measures and protect them from having their employment

terminated due to COVID-19. However, these measures have limitations and are simply not enough.

The federal Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (CRSB) for instance requires an employed or self-employed individual, who is off due to COVID-19 and has received one week of benefits, to apply again to receive a second week of benefits. This is not aligned with the science of a two-week incubation period for the virus. Moreover, the CRSB provides just two weeks of benefits for the entire year, which is a barrier for a worker who is sick for more than two weeks and needs to isolate for a longer period of time. The application process and waiting period for payment create a gap in income and a disincentive to stay home when sick. Income replacement for individuals who want to do the right thing and stay home when sick needs to be implemented with minimal administrative burden.

Further, at the outset of COVID-19 pandemic in March, the Province of Ontario introduced infectious disease emergency leave to protect employees from termination because they are off work due to COVID-19, which is scheduled to remain in force until January 2, 2021. Without such job protection in place, workers could go to work while sick because they fear being fired.

At its December 10<sup>th</sup> meeting, Peel Regional Council passed a resolution (attached) requesting that federal and provincial governments implement and fund the necessary policies and programs to provide adequate paid sick day benefits. This would ensure accessible and timely income/financial supports and remove barriers facing precariously employed Peel residents, allowing them to get tested, self-isolate and follow necessary COVID-19 control measures without fear of income-loss and financial hardship. We also acknowledge that the burden of this income support should not fall on businesses; especially small businesses that cannot take on additional costs at this time.

Further, it is requested that the Province to Ontario quickly move to extend infectious disease emergency leave beyond January 2, 2021. This will offer workers continued job protection and peace of mind. For administrative and communication purposes, the Province may want to consider linking this job protected leave for the duration of COVID-19 emergency period.

Given the urgency of the current state of the pandemic, we cannot afford to wait to do more to prevent the spread of the virus in our community. We encourage your governments move forward to implement these recommendations expeditiously, which are necessary to protect some of our most vulnerable workers who not only deserve respect and protection but will ultimately be critical to the post-pandemic recovery of our economy.

If you have any questions regarding our recommendations, please feel free to contact me at 905-791-7800 x4310. It would be a pleasure to hear from you.

**Nando Iannicca**  
Regional Chair & CEO

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Suite A, 5th Floor  
Brampton, ON L6T 4B9  
905-791-7800 ext. 4310

Kindest personal regards,



Nando Iannicca,  
Regional Chair and CEO

CC:  
Peel-area MPs and MPPs  
GTHA Municipalities

Attached: Resolution - Paid Sick Days