



January 19, 2021

Mayor Patrick Brown
City of Brampton

Dear Mayor Brown and Members of Brampton City Council

Re: Item 6.2 - Update from Mayor P. Brown, re: COVID-19 Emergency

This is a submission on behalf of United Way Greater Toronto (UWGT), in support of your call for paid sick days for workers. We thank you and all GTA Mayors who have made this a priority, along with the Region of Peel (Item 9.4.1). After government, UWGT is the largest funder of human and social services in Peel, Toronto and York Region. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, and as one of the trustees for the federal Emergency Community Support Fund, we have directed more than \$31 million to over 800 COVID-specific emergency programs driven by 500 community agencies.

Beyond our role as funders, we engage with our agencies to gain a better understanding of barriers that their clients face in overcoming poverty. Through tables such as the Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy (PPRS) and the Peel Alliance to End Homelessness (PAEH), it has become clear that lack of access to stable, secure employment with benefits is often the biggest barrier for residents in Peel in breaking the cycle of poverty.

In collaboration with McMaster University and the Region of Peel, UWGT has documented the growing phenomenon of precarious work and its connection to rising poverty in the Greater Toronto & Hamilton Area. The series of reports include: *It's More than Poverty* (2013), *The Precarity Penalty* (2015) and *Getting Left Behind* (2018). The research showed that almost 4 in 10 (37.2%) workers in the GTHA work in situations with some degree of precarity. Those in precarious jobs were found to earn 51% less than those in secure jobs and have a hard time moving into better opportunities. They lack access to important supports such as paid leave and risk losing income or their job if they call in sick. Only 12% of those in precarious employment were paid if they missed a day's work.

Lack of access to paid sick days is even more detrimental during the pandemic, when the repercussions of going to work sick can impact workers, their families, their communities and the economy. We encourage Council to adopt this motion and to advocate for the expansion of paid sick days to precarious contract and temporary workers as well.

Our reports document how workers in precarious employment are often stuck in a cycle of poverty and lack access to opportunity, resulting in significant negative impacts on their livelihoods, their families and their communities. This lack of access to paid or unpaid leave compounds the vulnerabilities that these workers face. Not having access to job-protected leave, let alone paid time off, can compromise a household's ability to

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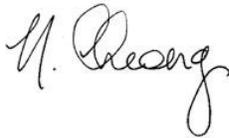
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cope with unanticipated events – such as a child’s illness – consequently contributing to the higher levels of stress and anxiety as we reported in *The Precarity Penalty*. And, as we have seen in more recent data, not having paid time off is one of the contributing factors to the spread of COVID-19.

Therefore, we support your call for changes to the *Employment Standards Act* and request that the term “Paid Sick Days” be changed to “Paid Emergency Leave”. This is an important distinction. Paid Sick Days assumes that the worker can stay at home when they themselves are sick. However, Paid Emergency Leave would enable the worker to also stay home and take care of a dependent family member such as a child, parent or a sibling if they are unwell. This is important to help ensure workers can achieve a meaningful work-life balance and that Bramptonians who are unwell get adequate care at home.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any further questions.

Sincerely



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