

March 17, 2023

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

RE: The future of Ontario's paid sick leave policy

Dear Minister McNaughton,

For three years, Ontario has been grappling with public health and economic uncertainty as the COVID-19 pandemic and other respiratory viruses continue to circulate among the population. The province's temporary government-paid pandemic sick leave program continues to be vital during this time, allowing workers to stay home for a period of time when sick and helping businesses keep their doors open. As the Ontario government approaches the March 31, 2023 deadline, the government will have an important decision to make: to either repeal, amend, or extend the temporary program.

The OCC is calling for a meaningful consultative process before any permanent changes are introduced to ensure sick day policies and programs are informed by data, designed to address existing gaps, and avoids adverse consequences for smaller employers.

The majority of businesses in Ontario, both small and large, already offer their employees paid sick leave ([2023 Business Confidence Survey](#)). It is a smaller, limited pool of employers that don't offer sick days, many of whom are still struggling against the backdrop of economic uncertainty driven by mounting debt, labour shortages, and the rising cost of doing business.

Available government data suggests the program has not been abused and has proven to be cost-effective for the Ontario government, while also providing much-needed support for some businesses and their employees.

In considering whether to end, extend, or amend the existing government-paid sick leave program, we encourage the Ontario government to evaluate the successful aspects of the program (e.g., direct employer reimbursement through WSIB) as well as potential shortcomings that could be addressed in an amended and extended version of the program (e.g., no annual renewal provision for the 3 days).

Ensuring workers can afford to stay home when they are sick is sound from both an economic and public health perspective. Given the ongoing risk of COVID-19, emerging variants, and other respiratory illnesses, access to some form of paid sick leave will help support business continuity and public health.

The OCC looks forward to continuing to work with the government and our members on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

Cc: Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy, Minister of Finance