

April 21, 2021

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

RE: Temporary, government-paid pandemic sick leave

Dear Minister McNaughton,

Thank you for your continued leadership to support both employers and employees as they experience economic disruptions related to COVID-19. As the situation continues to evolve, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce is receiving concerns from the business community and communicating them to all orders of government.

I am writing to you reiterate our position and to request that the Ontario government consider amending the *Employment Standards Act* to guarantee a number of paid sick days, which could be jointly funded by provincial and federal governments.

Ensuring people during a pandemic can afford to stay home is the right thing to do – both morally and economically. When a worker protects themselves, they are protecting their colleagues, their employer, safeguarding the business, and the wider community by extension.

Our position is that business, particularly small businesses, simply cannot afford the additional financial responsibility to fund sick leave at this time, which is why we support the notion of a temporary paid sick program that is paid for by the government for the duration of the pandemic.

The program offered through the federal government has specific eligibility criteria to qualify to receive it and has processing delays to receive payment after applying. This makes it very difficult for low-income households, that are reliant on their weekly income to make ends meet. A paid sick day, on the other hand, is a benefit that does not cause you to lose take-home income, and there is no application required or interruption or reduction in income.

Public health and safety are priorities for all Ontario businesses. We will continue to monitor and assess new developments pertaining to COVID-19 and work with our members, partners, and all orders of government to support Ontario business.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce