



Victoria Health Co-operative, the VHC

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On behalf of the Victoria Health Co-operative, we join the Retail Action Network and the B.C. Employment Standards Coalition in their call for provincially legislated and permanent paid sick days for workers in BC.

Precarious and low-income workers have been disproportionately impacted by the economic effects of COVID-19. The Decent Work and Health Network (DWHN) released a report which surveyed physicians across Canada. This report demonstrates that over half (58%) of workers in Canada don't have paid sick days. For workers in low-income jobs, this number jumps to over 70%. It is essential that we ensure workers have permanent paid sick days to protect their health and to effectively prevent the spread of COVID-19.

As children return to school and we enter cold and flu season, we need to be increasingly attentive to the health of our community. Recently we've had COVID-19 outbreaks in schools and in long-term care homes. The potential for a devastating second wave is further exacerbated when so many parents and families don't have access to paid sick days. This is why the BC government must implement a permanent provincial statute for paid sick leave under the BC Employment Standards Act.

We also acknowledge that, in September 2020, the federal government announced a Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit of \$500 per week for up to 10 days of sick leave. This is inadequate for a number of reasons: it does not replace full income for most workers, it is only for COVID-19 related sickness, workers are required to apply for the benefit after one week of sickness absence from work, to be eligible workers must have missed 60% of their work schedule, and the program is not permanent.

Supporting this campaign means:

- Providing employees, regardless of their employment status (full time, part time, casual) or length of service, with the right to paid sick leave.
- Updating the BC Employment Standards Act to immediately provide at least 21 days of paid sick leave for employees for as long as COVID-19 persists, without a minimum employment requirement and without a requirement for proof of being unwell.
- Ensuring that beyond the COVID-19 public health emergency, the Employment Standards Act provides workers in BC with permanent access to paid sick leave protection accrued in proportion to hours work (e.g. 7 paid sick days per year for an employee who works 35-hr/ week).

The right to paid sick days is long overdue for workers who should not have to go into work sick in order to ensure that their basic economic needs are met. The aforementioned

measures are essential for the health and safety of workers and the public at large.

We stand with the [Retail Action Network](#) and the B. C. Employment Standards Coalition in calling for permanent, legislated paid sick days for workers in BC.

Thank you for reading,

Abi Michel

Director

Victoria Health Co-operative