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**December 24, 2020**

REGION OF PEEL  
OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL CLERK

From: Prime Minister/Premier Ministre <[PM@pm.gc.ca](mailto:PM@pm.gc.ca)>  
Sent: December 24, 2020 9:34 AM  
To: Iannicca, Nando <[nando.iannicca@peelregion.ca](mailto:nando.iannicca@peelregion.ca)>  
Cc: Carla Qualtrough <[EDSC.SM.CORR.DEPT-MS.CORR.DEPT.ESDC@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca](mailto:EDSC.SM.CORR.DEPT-MS.CORR.DEPT.ESDC@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca)>  
Subject: Office of the Prime Minister / Cabinet du premier ministre

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Dear Mr. Iannicca:

On behalf of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, I would like to acknowledge receipt of your letter of December 10, 2020, regarding a resolution passed by the Region of Peel in relation to paid sick days for workers.

Thank you for writing to the Prime Minister. You may be assured that your comments, offered on behalf of the Peel Regional Council, have been carefully reviewed.

As you may know, the issue you raise falls within the portfolio of the Honourable Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion. I have therefore taken the liberty of forwarding your email and attached letter to Minister Qualtrough for her information and consideration.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to write.

K. Bentsen  
Executive Correspondence Officer  
for the Prime Minister's Office  
Agent de correspondance  
de la haute direction  
pour le Cabinet du premier ministre

REFERRAL TO \_\_\_\_\_  
RECOMMENDED \_\_\_\_\_  
DIRECTION REQUIRED \_\_\_\_\_  
RECEIPT RECOMMENDED ☒ \_\_\_\_\_

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

10 Peel Centre Dr.  
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

## Resolution

**Agenda Number:** 8.1

**Date:** Regional Council, December 10, 2020

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**Moved by** Councillor Brown, Councillor Crombie and Councillor Thompson

Whereas the Region of Peel is currently in lockdown and, as of December 7, 2020, has an incidence rate of 202.9 cases per 100,000 population and a test positivity rate of 10.6 per cent, which are well above the threshold for the control or red level under the Provincial COVID-19 response framework;

And whereas, workplaces are a source of COVID-19 transmission in Peel and a Peel Public Health Surveillance identifies that among COVID-19 cases the most frequently reported occupation categories after health (8.9 per cent), are trades, transport and equipment operators (5.5 per cent), sales and service (3.9 per cent) and manufacturing and utilities (3.4 per cent);

And whereas, it is workers in precarious employment who are most likely to not have paid sick days, including low-income workers, essential workers, contract and agency workers, those who cannot work remotely, and many health-care workers;

And whereas, many of these workers simply cannot afford to take time off work;

And whereas, the federal government has established the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (CRSB) which provides support to eligible employed and self-employed individuals who are unable to work because they are sick with COVID-19 or may be sick with COVID-19, or need to self-isolate due to COVID-19, or have an underlying health condition that puts them at greater risk of getting COVID-19;

And whereas, the CRSB is only limited to \$450 (after taxes are withheld) for a one-week period and the employed or self-employed individual must apply again to receive a second week of benefits and that only a total of two weeks of benefits are available, which is a barrier for a worker who is sick and needs to isolate for a longer period of time;

And whereas, the Ontario government through Bill 186, *Employment Standards Amendment Act (Infectious Disease Emergencies)*, 2020, created job protected infectious disease emergency leave so that an employee cannot be threatened, fired or penalized in any other way because the employee took or plans on taking an infectious disease emergency leave for COVID-19;

And whereas, on September 3, 2020, the Ontario government through Ontario Regulation 228/20 extended infectious disease emergency leave, which is set to end on January 2, 2021;

And whereas, the lack of 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, due to the fear of income-loss and financial hardship;

Therefore be it resolved, that the Regional Chair write to the Prime Minister of Canada and Premier of Ontario, on behalf of Regional Council, to request that:

- the federal and provincial governments implement and fund the necessary policies and programs to provide adequate paid sick day benefits to ensure accessible and timely income/financial supports in order to remove barriers facing precariously employed Peel residents, which will allow them to get tested, self-isolate and follow necessary COVID-19 control measures without fear of income-loss and financial hardship;
- the provincial government extend infectious disease emergency leave beyond January 2, 2021 and do this expeditiously to give workers job protection and peace of mind;

And further, that a copy of this resolution be sent to all Peel-area MPs and MPPs for their awareness and active support;

And further, that a copy of this resolution be sent to Greater Toronto Hamilton Area municipalities.