

TO: **Hon. Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario**  
**Hon. Kevin Flynn, Minister of Labour**  
**Hon. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care**  
CC: **Ontario Members of Provincial Parliament**

RE: **Ontario's health workers call for paid sick days to be included in reforms**

We are Ontario's health professionals, front-line health workers and public health experts who share your concern about the **increasing frequency of precarious employment**: low-wage, temporary and contract work without benefits. We applaud the government's move to update the Employment Standards Act, Labour Relations Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Act, informed by the recently released final report of the Changing Workplaces Review.<sup>1</sup> As Minister of Labour Kevin Flynn recently stated, "*people across Ontario are feeling less secure... fairness and decency must continue to be the defining values of our workplaces*".<sup>2</sup>

In our clinics, emergency rooms and hospitals, **we see how precarious work harms the health of our patients**. Precarious work has been found to result in higher rates of occupational injuries<sup>3</sup>, higher rates of mental distress<sup>4</sup> and illness<sup>5</sup>, and even higher mortality rates.<sup>6</sup>

Most precariously employed Ontarians do not have paid sick days.<sup>7</sup> Studies by the Centers for Disease Control<sup>8</sup> and the Public Health Agency of Canada<sup>9</sup> have shown that without paid sick days, people go to work while ill. Conversely, **providing paid sick days** reduces the duration of illness<sup>10</sup> and the worsening of minor conditions.<sup>11</sup> Access to paid sick days is associated with higher rates of return to work following heart attacks<sup>12</sup> and an overall lower burden on healthcare.<sup>13</sup> Paid sick days allow people to get the care they need in more appropriate and less expensive settings, in primary care rather than emergency rooms.<sup>14</sup>

The evidence is clear: paid sick days would be beneficial for the health of Ontarians. **We call on the Ontario government to include paid sick days in the forthcoming reforms. With the decisions made in the coming days, the government has the opportunity to better the health of all Ontarians by ensuring everyone can stay home if they are sick.**

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.ontario.ca/page/changing-workplaces-review-summary-report>

<sup>2</sup><https://news.ontario.ca/mol/en/2017/05/statement-from-minister-flynn-on-the-release-of-the-changing-workplaces-review-final-report.html>

<sup>3</sup> Benavides FG, Benach J, Muntaner C, Delclos GL, Catot N, Amable M. Associations between temporary employment and occupational injury: what are the mechanisms? *Occup Environ Med* 2006 Jun;63(6):416-21

<sup>4</sup> Ferrie JE. Is job insecurity harmful to health? *J R Soc Med* 2001 Feb; 94(2):71-6.

<sup>5</sup> Vives A, Amable M, Ferrer M, Moncada S, Llorens C, Muntaner C, et al. Employment precariousness and poor mental health: evidence from Spain on a new social determinant of health. *J Environ Public Health* 2013; 978656.

<sup>6</sup> Kivimaki M, Vahtera J, Virtanen M, Elovainio M, Penn J, Ferrie JE. Temporary employment and risk of overall and cause-specific mortality. *Am J Epidemiol* 2003 Oct 1;158(7):663-8.

<sup>7</sup>[https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Ontario%20Office/2015/06/Higher\\_Standard.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Ontario%20Office/2015/06/Higher_Standard.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/ehsnet/plain\\_language/food-workers-reasons-for-working-sick.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/ehsnet/plain_language/food-workers-reasons-for-working-sick.htm)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/ccdr-rmtc/06vol32/dr3216a-eng.php>

<sup>10</sup> Gilleskie, D. A Dynamic Stochastic Model of Medical Care Use and Work Absence. *Econometrica* 1998; 66 (1): 1-45

<sup>11</sup> Aronsson G, Gustafsson K, Dallner M. Sick but yet at work. An empirical study of sickness presenteeism. *J Epidemiol Community Health* 2000 Jul; 54 (7): 502-509.

<sup>12</sup> Earle A, Ayanian JZ, Heymann J. Work resumption after newly diagnosed coronary heart disease: findings on the importance of paid leave. *J Womens Health* 2006 May; 15(4): 430-41.

<sup>13</sup> <https://iwpr.org/publications/no-time-to-be-sick-why-everyone-suffers-when-workers-dont-have-paid-sick-leave/>

<sup>14</sup> Bhuyan SS et al. Paid sick leave is associated with fewer ED visits among US private sector working adults. *Am J Emergency Medicine* 2016; 34: 784-789

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