

May 3, 2021

Honourable John Horgan
Premier, BC
PO BOX 9041
STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

Sent via Email Premier@gov.bc.ca

Dear Premier Horgan,

Re: Emergency Sick Leave Coverage During the COVID-19 Pandemic

We want to thank your government for the considerable efforts taken to assist individuals and businesses cope with the unprecedented health and economic fallout from COVID-19. Your government's support to date is greatly appreciated.

Together, our collective commitment is, and must continue to be, protecting the health of British Columbians. You have communicated this regularly and have collaborated in efforts with the provinces to stem the spread of COVID-19 and reduce the incidence of infection. Businesses can only control what happens within the workplace environment while still bearing the risk of individuals' decisions taken outside of the workplace. Within what our members can control, they certainly have stepped up.

Employers have followed health orders, constantly revised and updated safety plans, reduced capacity and made investments in PPE with scarce resources. We are proud of BC businesses' response to the pandemic and the commitment to invest in health and safety to protect customers and workers.

We are writing to you regarding sick-pay for COVID-19. We were pleased to support your advocacy in the spring of 2020 resulting in federal action to introduce the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (CRSB). Over the course of the pandemic, we have seen multiple changes to virtually every program announced to ensure those needing support received it. We therefore share your disappointment at the unwillingness of federal authorities to address concerns regarding the CRSB. This is especially true of processing timelines for the program given more expedited processing would better achieve the objectives of the benefit itself.

Against this backdrop, we understand your government is considering implementing a provincial sick leave policy. Business leaders understand and fully support the need for workers who contract COVID-19 to rest, isolate and recover. We also understand the ongoing imperative for workers with mild symptoms or who have tested positive to self-isolate.

We believe it is critical that any proposed provincial actions on sick leave be **temporary, funded by the provincial government from general revenues, and workable for business. We urge your government to consult extensively with the business community prior to enacting any policy or legislative change.**

COVID-19 is a global pandemic and a national and provincial public health emergency. Your government has provided supports, funding and resources required to get through the pandemic. There is still considerable uncertainty over the duration of the current pandemic. Given the significant financial implications of changes to sick leave, we urge your government to commit that any new policy be temporary and that it remain in place only for the duration of the current state of emergency.

Business, particularly small businesses, has been hit hard by the pandemic. Analysis from the CFIB shows the average small business has added more than \$170,000 in debt and over 1 in 10 worry they may never be able to repay it. More broadly, the recovery of private sector employment continues to lag the public sector throughout the province. We appreciate your public comments to date, recognizing businesses simply cannot afford the additional financial responsibility.

One of the main challenges with the CRSB is processing time. It is critical that any program designed to reimburse for sick days paid be efficient and swift in making small businesses whole.

Once again, we thank you and your government for your work to control the pandemic and ensure our economy functions to sustain British Columbia workers and families.

Sincerely,




Greg D'Avignon
President & CEO

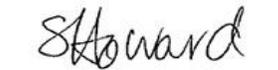



Bridgitte Anderson
President and CEO




Fiona Famulak
President & CEO

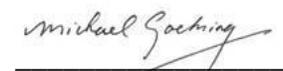



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cc.

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