



May 13, 2021

Dear Stakeholder,

As you may be aware, the NDP government has recently tabled [Bill 13 – Employment Standards Amendment Act \(No.2\), 2021](#). This legislation will require employers to pay workers their full wages and the government will reimburse employers up to \$200 per day for each worker who is not covered by an existing sick leave program, for up to three days.

Next to social gatherings, the workplace is the most common source of COVID-19 transmission and we believe that a government-funded temporary paid sick leave program is vital to help further prevent the spread of the virus. No worker should have to choose between a paycheque and keeping others safe.

But troublingly, and despite promises from the Premier and the Minister of Labour that B.C. businesses would not be burdened with the costs of this temporary program, this legislation will download additional costs onto businesses.

The government has not yet set up the Worksafe BC reimbursement program for employers and businesses, which means many businesses and employers will be on the hook for costs associated with this legislation — potentially for weeks if not months — before they will be reimbursed.

The other major concern is the ambiguity of the second section of the bill, which will implement a permanent paid sick leave program — the details of which have yet to be announced and will be introduced by regulation, behind closed doors, later this year.

While we are happy to see British Columbians are finally getting access to paid sick leave during this pandemic, we are concerned as to why this government feels the need to force this separate, permanent program through the Legislature now after delaying the introduction of a temporary program for more than a year.

Pursuing the second section of this bill now is unnecessary as it will not provide the opportunity for debate, nor will it allow for proper consultation on basic components of the permanent program, like whether it will be employer-funded.

The B.C. Legislature will be returning to sit again later this year in October when the government could introduce a bill for a permanent program as a separate piece of legislation, after undertaking the appropriate consultation with businesses and other employers, which our caucus has been strongly advocating for.

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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British Columbians deserve sick pay during a pandemic, but they also deserve a government that is open and transparent.

With this legislation, government reserves the right to download the potentially immense cost of a permanent program onto the backs of businesses, rather than uphold their promise of a government-funded sick pay program.

We will continue to hold government to account and advocate for government to consult with businesses and employers before passing this legislation, but we need your help to circulate this letter to your colleagues in the business community.

Please write to Premier Horgan at premier@gov.bc.ca with your concerns about this current legislation and copy me on your communication to his office so I can help amplify your voice.

If you have any additional questions or concerns about the implications of this legislation, please don't hesitate to reach out to my office directly.

Thank you,

Greg Kylo

MLA, Shuswap

Official Opposition Critic for Labour