

Decent Work for Better Health

Can we count on your support to improve the health of workers by supporting labour laws that provide all workers, regardless of size of their employer, with access to 10 days of unpaid personal emergency leave?

Would you also support changes that would give all workers the chance to accrue one hour of paid sick time for every 35 hours worked, up to 52 hours of paid sick time per year?

The province of Ontario is to be credited for its current examination of the province's outdated employment and labour laws through the Changing Workplaces Review.¹ With precarious employment as the "new norm" causing social stress across the income spectrum,² it is critical that employment and labour standards be strengthened and enforced. RNAO welcomed the July 27, 2016 release of the Interim Report of the Changing Workplaces Review, however, more work needs to be done.

Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada that has an employer-size (50+) eligibility threshold for personal emergency leave (PEL). For basic fairness, this arbitrary exemption should be removed so that all employees can have equitable access to unpaid PEL to deal with personal illness, injury or health emergency, death, or urgent matter concerning prescribed members of an employee's family.³

In addition to modernizing PEL by updating the *Employment Standards Act*, all employees should be able to accrue a minimum of one hour of paid sick time for every 35 hours worked, up to 52 hours of paid sick time per year (unless, of course, the employer selects a higher limit). This would work out to about seven paid sick days per year for a full-time employee. This would support the health of individual workers and their families, improve productivity, and lessen transmission of communicable diseases in public spaces that occurs when workers feel compelled to show up for work despite the fact they are contagious.⁴

References:

¹Ministry of Labour (2015). The Changing Workplaces Review. Toronto: Author.
<http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/about/workplace/>

²Mojtehdzadeh, S. (2015). Precarious work is now the new norm, United Way report says. *Toronto Star*, May 21, 2015.
<http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2015/05/21/precarious-work-is-now-the-new-norm-united-way-report-says.html>

³Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (2016). RNAO submission on personal emergency leave. Toronto: Author. August 31, 2016. <http://rnao.ca/policy/submissions/letter-personal-emergency-leave>

⁴Grinspun, D. (2016). Paid sick days for a fairer and healthier Ontario. *Hamilton Spectator*, February 3, 2016.
<http://www.thespec.com/opinion-story/6259946-paid-sick-days-for-a-fairer-and-healthier-ontario/>