

Dec. 8, 2022

Harry Bains

B.C. Minister of Labour

LBR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Harwinder Sandhu

MLA, Vernon-Monashee

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Re: Permanent, paid sick leave

Minister Bains and MLA Sandhu

The Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce wishes to comment on a proposal from the B.C. Federation of Labour to extend employer-paid sick leave from five to 15 days annually.

As our organization has previously stated, we appreciate that permanent, paid sick leave eases the financial burden on B.C. workers who may need to take time off to recover from illness. However, it is necessary to recognize the inflationary pressures and burden this will have on the economy, consumers, non-profit organizations and for-profit businesses. Financial investments employers already provide to their employees include at a minimum:

- Five days paid sick leave
- Canada Pension Plan contributions
- Employment Insurance contributions
- Employer Health Tax if applicable
- WorkSafeBC
- Vacation Pay

Many employers also provide their employees and families with extended health benefits.

The proposal from the B.C. Federation of Labour comes at a time when employers – both private businesses and non-profit organizations – are coping with the impact of rising inflation as well as the ongoing labour shortage. The proposal will also contribute to inflation due to the increased cost to businesses and the requirement to cover those increased costs with higher prices. Organizations requiring proof of illness will further the health crisis being experienced due to their employees being required to obtain doctors notes.

It is important to note that employers want to support their employees because a healthy workforce is vital to success, particularly when it comes to retention and recruitment of staff. However, the cumulative impact of taxation, employee benefits and the cost of labour and living cannot be ignored. Inflation impacts consumer confidence, supply chain disruptions continue, and another increase to the costs of doing business in B.C. is not needed to remain competitive in global markets.

Additional costs from potentially extending the number of paid sick days could force many businesses to suffer financially, potentially close and decrease the ability of non-profit organizations to provide important community services. Consumers may prefer to purchase online from outside of areas affected by price increases necessitated by this proposal and this would further damage business in the province.

Our Chamber, representing more than 600 business and non-profit organizations, urges your government to maintain the status quo of five employer-paid sick days per year plus the three unpaid days currently legislated. We would also request that the government initiate the following:

- Review and report on how many sick days have been taken by B.C. employees since the five-day policy was initiated and the cost to employers;
- Consult with business organizations on their experiences with the sick leave program and if the current process can be streamlined further;
- Consult with business organizations prior to any potential changes being made to paid sick leave, including the maximum number of days.

Ultimately, we are interested in ensuring B.C.'s workforce is healthy and an active partner in our economy while recognizing the significant contribution businesses and non-profits make to their employees and the province.

Thank you for your time and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Robin Cardew, President
Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce

Kevin Falcon, Leader of the BC Official Opposition
City of Vernon Mayor and Council
District of Coldstream Mayor and Council
Regional District of North Okanagan Board of Directors
Okanagan Indian Band Chief and Council
Okanagan-Shuswap Chambers of Commerce
Canadian Chamber of Commerce