



March 4, 2022

Trish Altass, MLA
Critic for Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture
Office of the Official Opposition
175 Richmond Street
Charlottetown, PE C1A 1H8
Delivered via Email

Dear Ms. Altass:

Re: Feedback on Proposed Paid Sick Leave Legislation

On behalf of the Greater Summerside Chamber of Commerce and our over 375 members representing over 6,000 employees, I write in response to your request for feedback regarding the proposed Paid Sick Leave legislation. The Chamber offers some considerations to you that are outlined below.

Timing and Impact

In a recent poll of our membership, over 70% of respondents indicated it would be very difficult for businesses (small-large) to fund 10 days of sick leave at this time. Covid 19 surveys completed by our membership over the last 2 years indicated a large percentage needed to access Federal and/or Provincial funding to supplement payroll expenses to maintain the level of staffing required to operate their businesses, especially those in the hardest hit sectors. This legislation increases the cost of labour putting more pressure on businesses during a challenging time and such legislation could encourage businesses to start outsourcing services.

Full-time vs Part-time

The Chamber asks for clarification in section 2 of the draft legislation in that this section be explicitly broken down to reflect the proposed sick days in relation to both full-time and part-time continuous employment.

Labour Shortage and Unplanned Absenteeism

The Chamber is concerned about the potential abuse of this legislation. Island businesses are currently experiencing a labour shortage making high unplanned absenteeism very difficult for small and medium sized businesses to manage. In addition, with the ability to carry over unused paid sick days to the following calendar year this could result in multiple day absences lasting more than 10 consecutive days.

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Administrative Burden

A change to this legislation would create additional administrative costs to implement and manage. Businesses would be required to amend existing policies, employee contracts and employee benefit tracking programs to reflect the accumulative sick days. As the draft legislature reads, these costs would fall on the businesses themselves. If mandated, these additional costs should be covered by government.

ESACRP

Currently, the Employment Standards Act Comprehensive Review Panel (ESACRP) is undertaking their first round of consultations, and the Chamber feels that this type of conversation should occur through this process. ESACRP will allow all voices to be adequately heard through a non-partisan review panel and for both businesses and employees to find common ground on the topic of paid sick leave.

Our members agree that adequate support should be in place when their employees become ill. However, the majority disagrees that ten days of paid sick leave is a reasonable policy to achieve at this time. The Chamber encourages your caucus to allow for proper consultation through the ESACRP. While we appreciate the efforts you are putting forward, the ongoing consultation process for ESACRP would help your efforts at consultation.

The Chamber thanks you for the opportunity to comment and identifying our organization as a stakeholder. The same way you represent your constituents, the Chamber represents our members and their concerns on the given topic. We hope you take these into consideration when bringing forward any proposed legislation and hope to keep an open line of communication on the matter.

Sincerely,



Tara Maddix
Executive Director

CC: Hon Matthew MacKay, Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture; Erin McGrath-Gaudet, Deputy Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture; GSCC Board of Directors