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Peggy Sattler MPP

London West

Dr. Nicola Mercer, Medical Officer of Health
Mr. George Bridge, Chair
Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health Board of Health

January 25, 2021

Dear Dr. Mercer, Mr. Bridge and Members of the Board of Health:

Recent months have seen a growing chorus of calls from public health experts, municipal leaders and workers' advocates across Ontario for paid sick days to help limit the spread of COVID-19. As MPP for London West, I am writing to let you know about the Private Member's Bill I introduced in the Ontario Legislature on December 8, 2020, the *Stay Home If You Are Sick Act*, which will provide permanent paid sick days for Ontario workers during the pandemic and beyond. This legislation, Bill 239, can be accessed here: www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/bills/parliament-42/session-1/bill-239.

The pandemic has highlighted the urgent need for access to paid sick days for Ontario workers. Workplaces are now the second-most common site of COVID-19 transmission, but many workers, especially if they are low-wage, do not have the choice to miss work because they cannot afford to give up their pay. The workers who are least likely to have paid sick days often work in occupations or sectors that are at high risk of COVID-19. Without access to paid sick days, these workers are forced to choose between paying the bills and providing for their families, or losing their income to protect their co-workers, customers and communities.

Bill 239 prevents Ontario workers from having to risk their own financial security in order to follow public health advice. The bill amends the *Employments Standards Act* to provide up to 14 days of paid Infectious Disease Emergency Leave and up to seven days of paid Personal Emergency Leave for illness, injury, bereavement, or family care, and eliminates the requirement for a doctor's note. The bill also calls for the establishment of a financial support program to help employers experiencing hardship with the cost of delivering Infectious Disease Emergency Leave and to transition to the implementation of regular paid sick days. The bill will fill in some of the gaps of the temporary Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit, which excludes many workers and does not protect against the immediate loss of income that makes it impossible for so many workers to stay home if they are sick.

I respectfully request that the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health Board of Health review this letter at your next Board meeting, and ask for your support in principle for Bill 239. The bill draws on the expertise and research of health care professionals from the Decent Work and Health Network, and has been endorsed by the Ontario Federation of Labour and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. It will be debated at second reading after the Ontario Legislature resumes on February 16, 2021. Your endorsement would further demonstrate the breadth of support for paid sick days across Ontario, and help advance this important health equity measure and essential public health policy to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases.

Thank you for your consideration. Please don't hesitate to let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peggy Sattler".

Peggy Sattler, MPP
London West