September 7, 2021 |

Releases

Support for 10 days of employer-paid sick leave extensive across political spectrum: new poll

(Unceded Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and Musqueam territories — Vancouver, BC) As the Delta variant drives a new wave of COVID-19 in BC, new public opinion research shows nearly nine-in-ten British Columbians believe businesses should provide paid sick leave, with 80% of British Columbians supporting at least 10 days per year. The poll, conducted by Research Co. in late August, shows this support is consistent across the political spectrum, with BC Liberal, BC Green and BC NDP supporters aligned.

“British Columbians overwhelmingly agree that no one should have to choose between their health and the income they rely on to care for their loved ones,” said BCFED President Laird Cronk. “As the BC government weighs options and models for implementing permanent paid sick leave, this is clear evidence that British Columbians see 10 days of paid sick leave as an employer responsibility.”

Following significant public pressure from the labour movement, the BC government legislated amendments to the *Employment Standards Act* in May to include a permanent paid sick leave entitlement for provincially-regulated employees. A consultation process is currently under way to inform what that program will entail when it comes into effect in January 2022.

The poll shows that more than three-in-four British Columbians (76%) think the program should cover part-time and casual workers in addition to full-time employees. “The results of this poll demonstrate a striking consensus across age, gender, region and income level: British Columbians support a robust, universal, employer-paid sick leave program,” said Mario Canseco, President of Research Co. “And that support is steady for those with and without access to paid sick days.”

The findings are detailed in a new BCFED report titled *An Equitable Recovery: The Case for Paid Sick Leave as a Right of Employment in BC*. The report draws on extensive literature to demonstrate that paid sick leave protects public health by limiting broader contagion and illness, while also boosting economic resiliency and workplace productivity.

The report also shines a light on how the lack of access to paid sick leave amplifies racial and gender inequality. Nearly nine-in-ten, low-wage workers — predominantly women and racialized workers — and 53% of all workers in BC currently have no paid sick leave. Ten days of paid sick leave will serve as an important inequality-fighting foundation to any economic recovery.

“The pandemic has crystalized the public health and economic case for paid sick leave in BC,” added Cronk. “As a matter of equity and fairness, we must stop forcing workers to choose between their health and paying their bills.”

Background:

Read An Equitable Recovery: The Case for Paid Sick Leave as a Right of Employment in BC here.

Read Research Co.’s polling factum here.