



26 May 2020

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

Re: Annual 10 Paid Sick Days Proposal

The Chambers of Commerce representing businesses in Fredericton, Moncton and Saint John New Brunswick are writing to you today to express the very serious and strong concerns of our members regarding your comments on Monday 25 May 2020 that you plan to engage with provincial and territorial governments about ensuring that workers have access to up to 10 paid sick leave days per year. The reaction from many of the small businesses in our region has been immediate – they are shocked at this proposal being put forward at this time.

PM Trudeau, in your comments, you characterized the idea of a 10 day mandatory paid sick leave benefit as important to the country's recovery phase. While we agree that maintaining public health and ensuring the health of workers is of utmost importance - many employers were not in a position to absorb the cost of such a plan before the COVID-19 crisis – and are much less so now.

Employers understand very well both the value and cost of paid sick leave. It is an important employee recruitment and retention tool at any time – employers would offer more such benefits if they were able to do so. Part of the struggle of running a business through the pandemic is going to be the strain on human resources – already a source of difficulty in New Brunswick and elsewhere. Employers are focused on complying with public health recommendations to keep their employees and customers healthy and safe.

Surely the past three months have demonstrated just how razor thin the line is between success and failure for many of our small businesses throughout the country. The federal government has committed nearly \$150 billion in COVID-19 support and relief measures for a reason – businesses and jobs are on the brink. It is unfathomable that any government or elected official, no matter how well intentioned, would add an additional layer of unaffordable costs on the backs of small business at a time when they are at their most vulnerable and fragile – many are, in fact, participating in wage support programs – it defies logic to increase their permanent and ongoing costs.



Perhaps as the COVID-19 pandemic, our response to it, and the various programs evolve, this type of leave for individuals can be best suited as a targeted government support mechanism. We look forward to discussing this and our other workforce challenges in more depth as we navigate the recovery process together. However, we would state unequivocally at this time that this is not a policy or program supported by the small businesses within the membership of all three of the largest Chambers of Commerce in New Brunswick representing nearly 3000 businesses and organizations in the region.

Sincerely,

John Wishart, CEO
Chamber of Commerce
For Greater Moncton

Krista Ross, CEO
Fredericton
Chamber of Commerce

David Duplisea, CEO
Saint John Region
Chamber of Commerce

cc: Hon. Blaine Higgs, Premier, Province of New Brunswick
cc: Jenica Atwin, MP, Fredericton
cc: Hon. Dominic LeBlanc, MP, Beauséjour
cc: Serge Cormier, MP, Acadie-Bathurst
cc: René Arseneault, MP, Madawaska-Restigouche
cc: Pat Finnigan, MP, Miramichi-Grand Lake
cc: Ginette Petitpas-Taylor, MP, Moncton-Riverview-Dieppe
cc: Wayne Long, MP, Saint John-Rothesay
cc: Rob Moore, MP, Fundy Royal
cc: John Williamson, MP, New Brunswick Southwest
cc: Richard Bragdon, MP, Tobique-Mactaquac
cc: Perrin Beatty, President and CEO, Canadian Chamber of Commerce
cc: Sheri Somerville, CEO, Atlantic Chamber of Commerce