February 16, 2021

The Honourable Doug Ford  
Premier of Ontario  
Legislative Bldg. Rm 281  
Queen’s Park  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Delivered via email

Dear Premier Ford,

RE: Paid Sick Leave During COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond

At its meeting held on January 20, 2021, the Chatham-Kent Board of Health passed the following motion:

That Chatham-Kent Board of Health further endorse the Toronto Board of Health position that the Government of Ontario:

1) Require employers in Ontario to provide no less than five paid sick days annually to workers after three months of employment, through amendments to the Employment Standards Act, 2000, or through a different mechanism, and

2) Provide necessary funding, fiscal relief, and/or supports to employers so that all workers in Ontario have access to no less than 10 paid sick days annually in the event of a declared infectious disease emergency such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Employment conditions are one of the key social determinants of health and the Ontario government can play a large role in setting the standards around employment conditions.

Previous to COVID-19, Chatham-Kent residents experienced higher proportions of the population working in lower wage manufacturing, retail, and service occupations. This has exposed Chatham-Kent residents to lower median household incomes, higher rates of poverty (with more than one in four children living in low income), and lower rates of post-secondary education.
With such financial insecurity prevalent in the community, the continuous rising cost of living, and the absence of paid sick leave for many, residents are faced with financial pressures to work even when they are ill. In doing so, these employees are endangering their own health and increasing the risk of spreading COVID-19 to others.

The Government of Ontario has noted that the federal government has already moved to cover paid sick days with the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit. However, this has not solved the issue as the program provides less than minimum wage.

Good health results from good, healthy public policy. Ensuring employers have paid sick days means that all Ontario workplaces are safer and healthier for everyone.

Sincerely,

Joe Faas
Chair, Chatham-Kent Board of Health

c: The Hon. Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development
The Hon. Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
The Hon. Merrilee Fullerton, Minister of Long-Term Care
Alison Blair, Associate Deputy Minister, Pandemic Response and Recovery
Rick Nicholls, MPP, Chatham-Kent-Leamington
Loretta Ryan, Executive Director, Association of Local Public Health Agencies
All Ontario Boards of Health