

Amendments to BC paid sick leave end exclusion of some union workers

Following a strong push by advocates for workers' rights, including HSA, the BC government made changes to the Employment Standards Act effective Jan. 1, 2022 to provide five paid sick leave days for all working British Columbians.

A feature in the legislation, however, excluded some workers covered by collective agreements to the minimum entitlement.

Last week, the Employments Standards Act was amended to eliminate that feature effective March 31. This ensures no one will be excluded from the provincial paid sick leave program because of existing language in collective agreements.

British Columbia is the first province in Canada to require employers to provide their employees a minimum of five days for paid sick leave, and a minimum of three days of unpaid sick leave. While the five-day plan is a strong start, HSA, along with other unions and organizations working on public health and workplace rights, continues to advocate for ten days of paid sick leave covering all workers.

Workplace outbreaks and transmissions during the COVID-19 pandemic have made it clear that paid sick leave is critical to protecting public health. Many front-line low-wage workers in Canada have no paid sick leave provisions at all.

HSA has supported a joint effort by labour groups across Canada to prioritize the implementation of universal, permanent and adequate employer-provided paid sick leave for all workers in the country, and continues to lobby the BC government to expand the new program.
