



10 Days of Paid Sick Leave and Healthy Communities

From day one of the pandemic, the Liberal government acted quickly to ensure Canadians from coast to coast to coast received the supports they needed, including access to safe and effective vaccines. As the result of rapid and proactive procurement, focused on building a diverse vaccine portfolio, the Liberal government rolled out the largest immunization campaign in Canadian history. Globally, Canada continues to be a leader in vaccination rates, with over 80 per cent of eligible people in the country vaccinated with their first dose and over 70 per cent of Canadians being fully vaccinated.

Canada's pandemic response is among the best in the world. Now, as we finish the fight against COVID-19, we will continue to support Canadians and get them back to work and school safely.

10 Days of Paid Sick Leave

Prior to the onset of the pandemic, more than half of workers across Canada reported having no access to paid sick leave, and roughly three quarters of those without access to paid sick leave earned less than \$25,000 annually¹. Employees shouldn't have to choose between their health and paying their bills, and deserve workplaces that are safe, productive, and help our economy grow.

If re-elected, a Liberal Government will prepare Canada for future pandemics with a plan to strengthen sick leave policies across governments and across sectors.

A Liberal Government will introduce amendments to the Canada Labour Code within the first hundred days of a new mandate to provide all federally regulated workers with 10 days of paid sick leave. Under this new amendment, employees will be able to take their sick days one or two days at a time, or in larger increments.

The Liberal government was the first to bring in three days of paid personal leave for federally regulated employees, which the Conservatives, NDP and Bloc Quebecois all opposed.

This amendment will also build on important legislation introduced by the Liberal government during the pandemic, namely the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit, which provided critical income support to employed and self-employed individuals who were unable to work due to illness or the need to self-isolate due to COVID-19. This benefit supported Canadians as they did the right thing and stepped up for their health and the health of those around them, providing individuals with \$500 per week, for up to 4 weeks until October 23, 2021.

In addition to securing 10 days of paid sick leave for federally-regulated Canadian workers through amendments to the Canada Labour Code, a Liberal Government will also support workers by immediately convening the provinces and territories to discuss legislating sick leave across the country. These discussions will be informed by consultations with small businesses from across sectors.

While a Liberal government will always respect provincial-territorial jurisdiction and the unique needs of small business owners, it will lead by example and strongly encourage provinces and territories to emulate or exceed the federal sick leave model.

Building Healthy Communities

Ensuring sustained safe in-person attendance at school and participation in community activities, as well as the continued operation of businesses, is a top priority for the Liberals as we enter Fall 2021.

Data suggests that the COVID-19 virus can spread more easily when there is a high number of people indoors experiencing poor airflow or ventilation for extended periods of time. According to Health Canada: “Proper ventilation is one way to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Good ventilation exchanges indoor air for outdoor air, helping to reduce potentially infectious particles in the air indoors”.

That’s why a re-elected Liberal government will:

- Provide a \$100 million top-up to the Safe Return to Class Fund for ventilation improvement projects across Canada, as well as \$10 million for First Nations to improve indoor air quality in on-reserve schools;
- Provide \$100 million to the Canada Healthy Communities Initiative with \$70 million of this funding directed to a new pillar focused on increasing indoor ventilation; and
- Introduce a tax credit for small businesses to make it easier for them to invest in better ventilation.

These investments will increase safety for our children, youth, workers, and customers alike by improving air quality and providing an additional layer of defense against COVID-19 transmission.

Safe Return to Class Fund

The \$2 billion Safe Return to Class Fund was created in August 2020 and the second installment of the funding was announced in January 2021. The fund can be used for various measures, such as supporting adapted learning spaces and remote learning, improving air ventilation, increasing hand sanitation and hygiene, purchasing personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies, and providing health and safety training for staff.

Today’s announcement proposes an additional \$100 million to improve air quality in Canadian schools while respecting provincial and territorial jurisdiction.

Projects could include improving ventilation through upgrades or conversions of heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems, or implementing alternative measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 through the installment of air-purifying (HEPA) filters in all rooms without mechanical ventilation.

Canada Healthy Communities Initiative

The new pillar within the Healthy Communities Initiative will provide funding to a broad range of organizations, including not-for-profits, charities, and Indigenous communities, for projects that help communities improve ventilation through upgrades or conversions of heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems, or implement alternative measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 through the installment of air-purifying (HEPA) filters in all rooms without mechanical ventilation. The additional funding will respect the agreed upon terms of the current agreement with Quebec.

The initiative’s three current pillars include: creating safe & vibrant public spaces, improving mobility options, and providing innovative digital solutions in response to COVID-19. Organizations from every province and territory have applied and a top-up to this program will ensure community-driven recovery efforts are protecting the health of communities and ensuring a more pandemic-resilient future.

Small business refundable tax credit

Through a refundable tax credit, small businesses will be able to claim 25% of eligible ventilation improvement expenses of up to \$10,000 per building location, with a maximum of \$50,000 per company. Eligible expenses could include upgrades or conversions of heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems to meet appropriate health standards. The tax credit will be 50% refundable.

This tax credit will only be available from September 1, 2021 through to the end of the 2022 tax year to incentivize quick upgrades.

Throughout the pandemic, our government has done whatever it takes – for as long as it takes – to keep Canadians safe, healthy, and supported. Now, as we move forward, we must ensure Canadians continue to receive the support they need.

¹ <http://pwhr.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2020/09/GSS-COVID-19-Research-Brief-2020.pdf>