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NEWS

REGION DEMANDS ACTION ON PAID SICK LEAVE

'IT'S A BIG PROBLEM WITH AN EASY SOLUTION'

MELANIE HENNESSEY
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Halton is calling on the provincial and federal governments to provide longer, better-funded sick leave to help stop the ongoing spread of COVID-19. Here's what you need to know about the issue and motion that was unanimously passed by regional council.

WHY IS THIS MOTION COMING FORWARD NOW?

According to Burlington Councillor Rory Nisan and Mayor Marianne Meed Ward, who put the resolution forth, the rise in workplace transmission of COVID-19 has highlighted the ongoing need for paid sick time so that people don't choose to attend work while ill, due to economic hardship.

HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE PAID SICK DAYS AT THE MOMENT?

Currently, only 42 per cent of Canada's workforce has access to paid sick days, said Halton Medical Officer of Health Dr. Hamidah Meghani, leaving 58 per cent of people in a difficult position. "It's vital that people should not have to choose between food on their table versus spreading COVID-19 in their workplace," she said.

DOES THE GOVERNMENT PROVIDE ANY FINANCIAL HELP TO THOSE WHO CONTRACT COVID-19 AND/OR HAVE TO QUARANTINE FOR 14 DAYS DUE TO EXPOSURE?

The Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit provides \$500 per week for up to two weeks for those who become sick or need to self-isolate. But Meghani said it can take anywhere from three to 28 days from application submission to receive the benefit — an amount that Nisan noted is less than minimum wage.

SO WHAT ELSE SHOULD BE DONE TO RECTIFY THIS ISSUE?

"To truly enable workers to stay home when sick during this pandemic, and to prevent the spread of other communicable disease in the future, a provincial policy is needed for paid sick days," said Meghani.

This type of policy would allow sick day pay to show up directly on pay cheques and provide job security, she noted.

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