

Ontario Announces Paid Sick Leave

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After months of public pressure and an unsuccessful attempt to partner with the federal government to top up its Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (the CRSB), the Ontario government has announced that it is launching its own sick pay program, which it is calling the Ontario COVID-19 Worker Protection Benefit Program (the WBP), via the *COVID-19 Putting Workers First Act*.

This program will provide eligible Ontario employees with up to three days of paid sick leave in the period between April 19, 2021 and September 25, 2021. Employees will receive up to \$200 per day in sick pay from their employers for days missed due to illness during this period. Employees will also be eligible for sick pay under the WBP if they take time off work to be vaccinated or are required to self-isolate due to potential exposure to COVID-19. Although the provincial government has not yet released draft regulations setting out the details of the WBP, initial reports indicate that the three sick days cannot be taken consecutively and employees are not obligated to provide a doctor's note verifying that they were unable to work due to illness. Employers will be responsible for providing employees with sick pay under the WBP but will apparently be eligible to have those costs reimbursed by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

The Ontario government has also indicated that they will continue to attempt to work with the Government of Canada to top up the CRSB for Ontario residents and that the WBP is intended to be an interim solution.

It is not yet clear how the precise amount of the benefit is to be calculated or if there are any restrictions on eligibility such as a minimum period of service as the link provided in the Minister's press conference was not active as of the date of the government's announcement.

The Cassels Employment & Labour Group will continue to monitor the progress of this draft legislation and will provide updates as they become available.

This publication is a general summary of the law. It does not replace legal advice tailored to your specific circumstances.