

# Sick Notes Are on Their Way Out: What Canadian Employers Need to Know

**Flu season is here** — and with it comes the annual wave of coughs, colds, and last-minute sick calls. However, this year, employers across Canada must handle those absences differently. Legislators are rewriting the rules on when you can (and can't) ask for a doctor's note.

The intent is simple: reduce pressure on the healthcare system and avoid unnecessary clinic visits for minor illnesses. For employers, that means rethinking long-standing attendance management habits.

Here's what's changing, and how you can prepare your workplace.

## The New Rules, Province by Province

### British Columbia

Bill 11 (2025) has been passed but is not yet in force. Once active, employers will be restricted from requiring a sick note for short-term illness or injury leave. The exact definition of "short-term" will be clarified in regulations expected later this year.

### Ontario

Ontario's *Working for Workers Acts* already prevent employers from requesting a medical note for the three paid ESA sick days. Bill 30 (2025) expands employee protections even further, signalling a clear shift away from documentation requirements.

## **Saskatchewan**

Employers may only request a sick note if:

the absence is more than five consecutive workdays, or

The employee has had two or more absences of two or more days in the last 12 months.

## **Other Provinces and Territories**

Not every jurisdiction has formal restrictions yet, but the trend is clear: sick notes for short illnesses are on their way out. Expect more provinces to follow BC, Ontario, and Saskatchewan's lead.

## **What This Means for Employers**

With flu season bringing a rise in one- or two-day absences, employers can no longer rely on sick notes as a first-line attendance management tool. In many provinces, that practice is no longer legal.

Instead, employers should:

**Update policies:** Review sick leave and attendance management policies to ensure they reflect current legislation.

**Train managers:** Supervisors need clarity on when they can and cannot ask for documentation.

**Use alternatives:** Self-declaration forms and absence tracking provide useful documentation without burdening employees or the healthcare system.

**Communicate clearly:** Let employees know about the new rules and expectations — it

builds trust and reduces confusion.

## **Real-World Scenarios**

### **The Monday/Friday Pattern**

An employee regularly calls in sick on Mondays. Previously, you may have required a doctor's note. Under new laws, that may no longer be allowed. Instead, use attendance tracking to identify the pattern and address it in a performance conversation.

### **The One-Day Flu Bug**

An employee misses a day with the flu. In most provinces, you cannot demand a doctor's note. A self-declaration form or a quick HR record is sufficient.

### **Extended Absence**

An employee recovering from surgery is off for two weeks. In this case, requesting medical documentation is still appropriate — and often necessary for planning accommodations.

### **Repeat Short Absences**

In Saskatchewan, repeated two-day absences may trigger the right to request documentation. Elsewhere, the better step is usually a coaching conversation about reliability.

## **The Bottom Line**

With flu season upon us, short absences are inevitable. But the rules have changed: sick notes for minor illnesses are no longer the default. Employers who adapt now will not only stay compliant but also demonstrate trust, reduce administrative headaches, and strengthen workplace culture.

**Now is the time to revisit your policies before flu season catches you off guard.**

Need help updating your sick leave policies or training your managers on the new rules? BLANKSLATE Partners can make sure you're compliant — and equipped with clear, practical processes that work for your team.