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Sick Leave Report / Rapport sur les congés de maladie

Link to the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report on sick leave in 20 federal departments :

http://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/files/files/Sick%20Leave%20II%20_EN.pdf

Lien vers le rapport du Directeur parlementaire du budget sur les congés de maladie dans 20 ministères:

http://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/files/files/Sick%20Leave%20II%20_FR.pdf



Federal sick leave doesn't cost extra, budget watchdog says

JORDAN PRESS, Ottawa Citizen, July 16, 2014

Public servants who call in sick create almost no extra costs for the federal government, suggesting there is no economic reason to change the current sick-leave system, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

That doesn't mean the sick-leave system is perfect: the PBO says a number of questions must be answered about who takes sick leave in the public service. The PBO also found there is a dearth of information about whether departments are backfilling for bureaucrats who take sick time off. Many appear not to track those details.

The conclusions are contained in a report released Wednesday, in which Jean-Denis Frechette's office reviewed the cost of sick leave in the 20 largest federal departments.

Reforms to the sick-leave system are a key issue in negotiations between the government and 17 federal unions.

Federal workers are allowed 15 days of paid sick leave a year, with unused days banked for use in future years. When they leave the public service, workers aren't paid out for days left banked.

Those workers take, on average, 11.5 days of paid sick leave a year, which accounts for about \$871 million in salaries. The number of sick days varies across departments, with Correctional Service Canada staff twice as likely to call in sick as employees of the Department of Foreign Affairs, for example.

When a federal worker calls in sick, many aren't replaced, meaning "there are no incremental costs," the PBO says in its report.

Of the two departments that did backfill for sick workers, and which provided detailed data to review, the costs were negligible. Correctional Service Canada, which tracked replacements, reported extra costs of \$7.2 million, or about 2.6 per cent of its overall budget in fiscal year 2011-12, according to the PBO.

"This is really marginal in terms of costs for their total expenditure envelope," Frechette said.

"Other departments, if you're not a front-line employee like Service Canada, like a guard in a prison, technically you don't have to be replaced ... Someone else can fill in that time, just not as backfill," he said. "If you don't backfill, you're saving the money."

The government argued that this finding points to other potential problems in the sick-leave system: If someone calls in sick, someone else has to pick up the slack. The PBO report only measured the financial cost of sick leave to determine if there was an effect on budgets and operations; it didn't perform a qualitative study to see if it had any effect on productivity or morale.

"When a manager is faced with a short-term sick-leave situation, she or he makes do with the staff that they have," said Treasury Board President Tony Clement. "That means people are doing two jobs rather than one ... These are the things that managers are telling me occurs."

Unions saw the PBO report as a victory, saying its numbers show the current public sector sick-leave system is sustainable.

"Contrary to Treasury Board Minister Tony Clement's repeated assertions, this report confirms that sick leave in the federal public service is not a financial burden on Canadians," said PSAC president Robyn Benson.

"This government's story on federal employee sick leave is as long as Pinocchio's nose," said PIPSC vice-president Shannon Bittman. "Their determination to bring in a massive,

privately run short-term disability plan, against evidence that it's needed, is proof that they intend to 'fix' sick leave until it's broken and to introduce a for-profit system that in the end will cost both employees and the public more than the existing one."

Public sector sick leave by the numbers

- 14.6: Average number of paid sick days annually at Correctional Service Canada, the highest among the 20 biggest federal departments
- 7.7: Average paid sick days at Foreign Affairs, the lowest among the 20 biggest federal departments
- 11.5: Average paid sick days across the federal public service
- \$871 million: Cost, in regular wages, for time of those who call in sick
- \$7.2 million: Estimated cost for Correctional Service Canada to replace workers who called in sick during the 2011-12 fiscal year
- 2.7: What that \$7.2 million was as a percentage of CSC's overall budget, the highest among the 20 departments surveyed by the PBO
- 0.2%: Cost as a fraction of the overall budgets in two departments (Employment and Social Development Canada, and Aboriginal Affairs) used for sick leave replacements
- 10% or \$500 million: Minimum percentage and cost established as the threshold for the PBO to conclude there was a "material" cost to backfilling for employees who are on sick leave.
- 0: Instances where the PBO found evidence that either of those two conditions was met.

(Source: Parliamentary Budget Officer report, "Fiscal Analysis of sick leave in 20 departments of the core public administration")

How does your department stack up?

The Parliamentary Budget Officer tabulated how many paid sick days are taken annually, on average, by department. Here they are from highest to lowest. Note that the figures for National Defence and the RCMP only capture sick leave by civilian personnel.

- Correctional Service Canada: 14.6
- Employment and Social Development Canada: 13.8
- Canada Border Services Agency: 13.5
- Veterans Affairs: 13.3
- Public Works and Government Services Canada: 11.8
- National Defence: 11.7
- Aboriginal Affairs: 11.4
- Citizenship and Immigration: 11.3
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police: 11.2
- Industry Canada: 10.8
- Statistics Canada: 10.7
- Transport Canada: 10.5
- Justice: 9.9

- Health Canada: 9.8
- Environment Canada: 9.1
- Agriculture and Agri Food: 9
- Fisheries and Oceans: 9
- Natural Resources Canada: 8.8
- Public Health Agency of Canada: 8.7
- Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development: 7.7

(Source: Parliamentary Budget Officer report, "Fiscal Analysis of sick leave in 20 departments of the core public administration")



PBO report finds no 'incremental' costs to federal civil service sick leave

TERRY PEDWELL, THE CANADIAN PRESS, July 15, 2014

OTTAWA - It costs taxpayers almost nothing extra to pay sick leave to federal civil servants, says a new report from the Parliamentary Budget Office.

The findings are ammunition for public-sector unions in their battle with the Treasury Board over proposed changes to government sick-leave policies.

Shortly after its release at least one union was using the report to attack the government's arguments for overhauling the system, although Treasury Board President Tony Clement said it was never his intention to find cost savings through the proposed reforms.

The report shows wide variances in the amount of sick leave taken from one department to another.

But parliamentary budget officer Jean-Denis Frechette says most departments don't have policies in place to backfill for sick leave.

"Since most departments do not call in replacements when an employee takes a sick day, there are no incremental costs," said the report released Wednesday.

Exceptions to that finding include departments where absences have a direct impact on service levels, health and safety.

Correctional Service Canada, for example, is required to maintain minimum staffing levels for the protection of the public, staff and inmates at federal prisons.

But in most cases, the report said, federal employees who call in sick are not replaced, resulting in no additional cost to taxpayers over and above regular public servant salaries.

Collective bargaining is currently underway between Treasury Board and 17 federal unions, with the government pushing for restructuring of benefits to reduce costs.

The governing Conservatives hope to cut the cost of public service pension, disability and sick leave benefits as part of efforts to balance the federal budget by next year.

Clement has said recently that the sick-leave system is unsustainable and that it needs to be revamped.

On Wednesday, however, he said that making the system more fair for all employees is his main objective, rather than cutting costs.

"My goal is not to achieve financial savings, but to put in a place a system that ensures all employees have equal access to a disability plan, allowing them the time needed to get healthy and back to work," the minister said in a statement.

The PBO report does not address the issue of loss of productivity and employee morale but highlights that there is no standard for addressing absenteeism, Clement said.

"This means many positions are not filled during a leave of absence due to illness. This could lead to teammates picking up extra workloads, or work not being completed in a timely manner," he said.

The unions have complained that Clement used inflated figures to justify his proposed reforms, and cited Wednesday's report as proof.

"This government's story on federal employee sick leave is as long as Pinocchio's nose," Shannon Bittman, vice president of the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, said in a statement.

Public servants are allowed 15 days of paid annual sick leave. And, on average, they take 11.5 days off because of illness, says the PBO.

Unlike most private-sector firms, where annual sick leave is granted on a 'use-it-or-lose-it' basis, federal workers can carry over their annual allotment from year to year.

The report found that sick leave can range from a low of 0.16 per cent of total departmental spending to 2.74 per cent on the high end of the scale.

The numbers are based on expenditures in the 2011-12 fiscal year.

The report also found that, in most cases, paid sick leave is proportional to departmental spending on regular wages.

"In other words, the more a department spends on wages, the more it spends on sick leave," the report said.

In February, the office published a report that estimated time lost due to illness in the federal civil service amounted to the equivalent of \$871 million in regular wages in the 2011-12 period.

The latest report was compiled after a request from New Democrat MP Paul Dewar and looked at data from 20 departments.

It found that Correctional Service Canada, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada and the Canada Border Services Agency consistently reported the highest average number of paid sick days per employee.

All three departments have minimum staffing level requirements to maintain operations.

In some cases, however, data was either incomplete or departments failed to provide numbers, said the report.

The border agency also noted that it does not track the cost of filling positions left vacant due to employee illness.

The report's findings indicate the Harper Conservatives are misleading Canadians, and have picked a fight with public-sector unions simply to bolster their support base going into a general election next year, said Dewar.

"There is no fiscal impact (from sick time) to the degree that (the Conservatives) were indicating," he said.

"It shows they were misleading Canadians."

CBCnews |

Civil servant sick leave costs minimal for taxpayers, report says

Most federal departments tend not to backfill staff on sick leave, Parliamentary Budget Office says

CBC News, July 16, 2014

It costs taxpayers almost nothing extra when federal civil servants call in sick, according to a report, as a battle looms between the Treasury Board and public-sector unions over salaries and benefits.

The report from the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) released Wednesday shows wide variances in how much sick leave is taken from one department to another.

But parliamentary budget officer Jean-Denis Fréchette says most departments don't have policies to backfill for sick leave.

That means most sick employees are not replaced, resulting in no incremental cost to departments.

The governing Conservatives have been looking to cut the cost of public-service salaries, pensions and sick leave as part of efforts to balance the federal budget by next year.

The new report was requested by NDP MP Paul Dewar after the PBO estimated this February that the fiscal impact of paid sick leave in the federal public service was \$871 million in 2011-12.

The report instead found there is "a notable variance among organizations in the use of sick leave," and that the cost of paid sick leave "was not fiscally material and did not represent material costs for departments in the CPA."

But the report also notes that data from some departments were incomplete, and sometimes unavailable.

The Canada Border Services Agency, for example — which was expected to have high sick leave costs because officers need to be backfilled for operational, health and safety reasons — said it does not track data on backfill costs due to sick leave.

The report also found:

- Correctional Service Canada logged the most days of paid sick leave, at 14.6, in 2011-12.
- The Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and International Development had the lowest number, at 7.7 days.



Federal civil servants' sick leave costs taxpayers almost nothing extra: PBO

The Canadian Press, CTV News, July 16, 2014

OTTAWA -- A new report says it costs taxpayers almost nothing extra to pay sick leave to federal civil servants.

The report from the Parliamentary Budget Office shows wide variances in the amount of sick leave taken from one department to another.

But Parliamentary Budget Officer Jean-Denis Frechette says most departments don't have policies in place to backfill for sick leave.

That means most employees who call in sick are not replaced, resulting in no incremental cost to departments.

The findings come as a battle looms between Treasury Board President Tony Clement and public-sector unions over salaries and benefits.

The governing Conservatives are looking to cut the cost of public service salaries, pensions and sick leave as part of efforts to balance the federal budget by next year.

The PBO report found that sick leave can range from a low of 0.16 per cent of total departmental spending to 2.74 per cent on the other end of the scale.

The numbers are based on expenditures in the 2011-12 fiscal year.

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The logo for LeDroit, featuring the word "LeDroit" in a red, serif font, with a horizontal line underneath.

Congés de maladie dans la fonction publique

Pas de coût supplémentaire significatif

Paul Gaboury, Le Droit, le 16 juillet 2014

Le coût supplémentaire des congés de maladie payés n'a pas été significatif financièrement et n'a pas représenté des sommes importantes pour 20 ministères fédéraux en 2011-2012.

Voilà la principale conclusion du rapport rendu public mercredi par le directeur parlementaire du budget, Jean-Denis Fréchette, sur l'importance relative financière et budgétaire des congés de maladie payés dans 20 ministères fédéraux.

«L'analyse des données laisse croire que, en 2011-2012, le coût supplémentaire des congés de maladie payés n'a pas été significatif financièrement et n'a pas représenté des sommes importantes pour les ministères», conclut le directeur parlementaire du budget, Jean-Denis Fréchette, dans son rapport publié mercredi.

En février 2014, le bureau du DPB avait publié un premier rapport qui avait chiffré à 871 millions \$ en 2011-2012 l'incidence financière des congés de maladie payés dans la fonction publique fédérale. Dans ce rapport, il avait indiqué avoir basé son analyse sur un nombre moyen de congés de maladie de 11,52 jours par employé. Toutefois, il avait alors constaté que le nombre variait beaucoup entre les ministères, de 7,7 jours aux Affaires étrangères à 14,6 jours à Service correctionnel. Aussi, les résultats révélaient des écarts importants variant de 0,16 à 2,74% des dépenses ministérielles totales.

Par la suite, c'est encore une fois à la demande du Nouveau parti démocratique que le bureau du DPB s'est penché sur l'importante relative financière et budgétaire des congés de maladie, objet du rapport déposé mercredi.

«Comme la plupart des ministères ne font pas appel à un remplaçant, il n'y a pas de coût supplémentaire. Font exception à cette pratique certains ministères assurant des fonctions opérationnelles pour lesquelles les absences auraient eu un effet direct sur le niveau de service, la santé ou la sécurité», note le DPB.

Pour y voir plus clair, son bureau a donc demandé des données pour trois groupes d'employés pour lesquels il est souvent nécessaire de remplacer les employés en congé de maladie: les agents de la Garde côtière, les agents correctionnels et les agents des services frontaliers.

«Sur les deux ministères qui ont fourni une réponse, aucun n'a signalé de coûts supplémentaires importants par comparaison au budget ou à l'enveloppe salariale du ministère» note le rapport.

Le DPB fait toutefois une mise en garde puisque les données transmises par le Secrétariat du Conseil du trésor sont regroupées et très générales, tandis que celles des ministères affichent des disparités qui empêchent leur rapprochement.

«La qualité et la disponibilité des données limitent la capacité de son bureau de fournir au Parlement une analyse financière des congés de maladie dans la fonction publique. Il recommande donc aux parlementaires de garder ces limites à l'esprit lorsqu'ils tireront des conclusions des résultats de l'analyse des données.

Congés de maladie: un rapport qui renforce la position de l'AFPC

Paul Gaboury, Le Droit, le 16 juillet 2014

Les syndicats et l'opposition officielle estiment que le nouveau rapport du directeur parlementaire du budget vient renforcer leur position déjà connue depuis plusieurs mois contre les changements draconiens que les conservateurs veulent imposer au régime actuel de congés de maladie des fonctionnaires fédéraux.

«J'espère qu'avec ce nouveau rapport, les choses vont être plus claires pour l'employeur et le ministre Tony Clement. Il vient renforcer notre position pour la suite des négociations», a fait valoir Larry Rousseau, vice-président exécutif de l'Alliance de la fonction publique du Canada pour la région de la capitale nationale.

«En fait, il n'y a pas grand-chose que nous ne savions pas dans ce rapport, qui vient confirmer les arguments que nous défendons depuis des mois. Le régime de congés de maladie ne représente pas un coût supplémentaire pour les contribuables. S'il y a des problèmes, nous allons en discuter à la table des négociations pour l'améliorer, pas pour s'en débarrasser», a ajouté le dirigeant syndical.

«En février, le DPB a publié un rapport démontrant que le président du Conseil du Trésor, Tony Clement, avait déformé les faits concernant le volume de congés de maladie pris par les fonctionnaires. Le rapport d'aujourd'hui démontre que M. Clement continue de faire de fausses déclarations concernant les travailleurs de la fonction publique», a fait valoir le député néo-démocrate d'Ottawa-Centre, Paul Dewar.

Le député Dewar a en même temps déploré que le gouvernement tente d'obliger les fonctionnaires à prendre davantage de congés non payés et d'aller travailler même s'ils sont malades.