

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Business owners call for province to immediately legislate paid sick days for all**

**TORONTO, February 10, 2020** -- Business owners from across Ontario came together today to call for the provincial government to legislate guaranteed paid sick leave for all workers. Small and mid-sized businesses know firsthand that paid sick days are good for their business, employees and communities. They are urging MPPs, who are set to return to the legislature next week, to pass Bill 239, *Stay Home If You Are Sick Act*, which would provide 7 permanent paid sick days and an additional 14 days during public health emergencies for all workers.

This government has cited small business interests as an excuse to avoid mandating a minimum standard for paid sick leave. In fact, paid sick days are not only a public health imperative, but make good business sense. The cost of providing paid sick leave is minimal compared to the cost of outbreaks or the cycles of lockdowns and restrictions, which will continue as long as workers without paid sick days have no choice but to go into work sick.

After providing paid sick days for years, business owners see firsthand how it reduces turnover by keeping talented and dedicated staff and making sure they are able to do their best work when they come in. It also builds morale that translates into strong, loyal relationships with customers and clients. The real challenge facing small and mid-sized businesses is competing with large, ultra-profitable companies that don't provide paid sick days. By legislating a guaranteed minimum standard for all workers to count on, the government can help level the playing field.

#### **Quotes:**

"Paid sick leave for all Ontario workers is the smart thing to do for business. The difficulty right now is some businesses offer paid sick days, some don't. As a business owner, if I'm providing paid sick leave to my staff member, I'm paying a little bit more than the bigger companies that aren't paying enough. And, illnesses like COVID-19 continue to spread. We can't wait any longer to make sure the floor is brought up to where everybody gets paid sick leave." - Helmi Ansari, co-founder and CEO of GROSCHE International inc. based in Cambridge

"I implemented paid sick leave from the start so that people could stay home when they're sick and take the time they need to get better. If someone comes in sick, everyone gets sick and it's a horrible cycle. Providing paid sick days protects against this. It means a better experience for customers and employees. And there's been no negative impact on my business. The real challenge is competing with huge companies who aren't playing by the same rules. I'm sick of small business being used as an excuse not to bring in paid sick days." - Sam Conover, owner of Broad Lingerie in Toronto

“Small business margins are very thin, so I do worry about not being able to pay the bills. But providing paid sick leave allows me to operate without the fear of what would happen if we all contracted COVID. Workers who are encouraged to take care of their health and given the necessary tools to do so are also loyal. My employee turnover is almost non-existent, which is a huge savings for my bottom line.” - Jessica Carpinone, co-owner of Bread by Us Bakery in Ottawa

“At Neal Brothers, my brother Chris and I have always believed in supporting our whole team in any way we can. We were raised with that notion of ‘do unto others as you would have do unto you’. Fundamentally, we know that supporting our employees builds a positive culture of trust, respect and loyalty. This is why we believe in supporting paid sick days, which has never been more important than it is now. ” - Peter Neal, co-founders of Neal Brothers Foods in Richmond Hill

**For more information or to arrange interviews, please contact:**

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**Bios:**

Helmi Ansari is the co-founder and CEO of GROSCHE International inc. GROSCHE is a small business based in Cambridge Ontario that started in the basement of their house and has quickly grown to be one of the top brands in coffee and tea ware in North America. They are a Carbon Neutral, and have been paying their staff a living wage since 2014 and are the first multi-site living wage employer in Ontario.

Jessica Carpinone is a co-owner of Bread by Us Bakery in Ottawa, a bakery and coffee shop with a particular focus on sourdough bread. She began working in professional kitchens in 2011. During that time, she developed an analysis and understanding of the challenging and often unfair working conditions that undermine the food industry. Opening Bread by Us has been an opportunity to explore alternative approaches to building a food business based on values of cooperation and shared prosperity.

Sam Conover is the owner of Broad Lingerie, a Toronto specialty lingerie store for full busted folks. Sam is passionate about creating positive retail experiences for both customers and staff. Sam's pronouns are she/her.

Peter Neal is one of the co-founders of Neal Brothers Foods and oversees Neal Brothers' Brand Development, Marketing, and Sales. When away from his desk, he relentlessly pursues the world looking for 'what's next' in the food industry to delight Canadians. Peter is also very passionate about supporting mental health initiatives in his community as they were there to support him during his own mental health journey.