



Closing the Gender Wage Gap & Equal Pay Day

Currently a number of working women in Ontario make approximately 31% less than men for work of equal value. Known as the gender pay gap, this difference widens for women of colour, Aboriginal women, LGBTQ women and women with disabilities among others. Despite the numerous gains made by working women, the gender pay gap demonstrates the degree to which women's work is undervalued and that the perception still exists that it is acceptable to pay women less for no other reason than they are not men.

While the Pay Equity Act was brought in by the province in 1987 to address this inequity, it has proven to be difficult to enforce and as a result many employers are not compliant. Twenty eight years later in 2015, the Ontario government launched the Closing the Gender Wage Strategy: Consultations with a mandate to "develop a wage gap strategy that will close the gap between men and women in the context of the 21st century." As part of the consultations both

organizations, and individuals were given the opportunity to make submissions that would in turn be used by the Closing the Gender Wage Strategy Steering Committee to "develop recommendations to create a strategy aimed at closing the gender wage gap through the actions of business, government, labour and all Ontarians."

Outside the Ontario government labour and activist organizations such as the Equal Pay Coalition, have long worked to close the gap through organizing actions such as Equal Pay Day to educate Ontarians as to how far into the year a woman has to work to match what a man has made in the previous year. Equal Pay Day varies year to year in order to mark how much or how little progress has been made in closing the gender wage gap. In 2016 Equal Pay Day will be taking place April 19.

Recently the Equal Pay Coalition has identified "Twelve Steps to End the Gender Pay Gap by 2025" which provide the following actions that governments, businesses and unions can take to close the gap:

- 1). Treat Closing the Gap as a Human Rights Priority
- 2). Raise Awareness through annual Equal Pay Days & Education
- 3). Develop the "Close the Gender Pay Gap by 2025 Plan"
- 4). Enforce & Expand Pay Equity Laws
- 5). Implement Employment Equity Law & Policies
- 6). Promote Access to Collective Bargaining

- 7).Increase the Minimum Wage
- 8).Provide Affordable & Accessible Child Care
- 9).Mainstream Equity Compliance into Government Laws & Policies
- 10).Mainstream Equity Compliance into Workplaces & Businesses
- 11).End Violence & Harassment of Women
- 12).Secure Decent Work for Women Across the Economic Spectrum

The Toronto York Region Labour Council Women’s Committee recommends that Labour Council:

Recognize & raise awareness of Equal Pay Day in the province of Ontario and encourage Labour Council delegates to participate in related actions.

Include Equal Pay Day and the gender wage gap on the agenda of the Labour Council meeting that takes place in the month of or prior to Equal Pay Day.

Endorse “the Twelve Steps to End the Gender Pay Gap by 2025” recommendations made by the Equal Pay Coalition.

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