

*Pay Equity Network*  
*le Réseau de l'équité salariale*  
*Pay Equity: at the heart of equality*  
*L'équité salariale... au cœur de l'égalité*

September 21, 2006

The federal government announced yesterday that it is taking a giant step backwards on the question of equal pay for women workers.

More than thirty years after the adoption of the Canadian Human Rights Act, women still earn less, on average, than men regardless of their occupation, age or education. Today, a woman earns 72.5 cents for every dollar a man earns. Our equal pay legislation is not working. The wage gap is even greater for Aboriginal women, women of colour and women with disabilities.

The federally appointed Pay Equity Task Force issued a thoroughly researched Report in 2004 which found that current federal pay equity legislation doesn't work. They recommended a new proactive pay equity law, similar to laws in existence in Ontario and Quebec. During the Task Force study, all participants - employers, unions and women's groups - agreed that a new effective, accessible law which requires positive employer action, provides clear standards and allows access to an expert independent adjudicative body was required.

The federal government, in its response to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women tabled September 18, has chosen to ignore this consensus and instead is going back to a system that has proven itself to be totally inadequate over the last twenty-five years. Indeed, education, mediation and compliance inspections are all components of current policy which have proven ineffective, time consuming and ultimately extremely costly to both employers and unions. It took fourteen years and hundreds of days in legal wrangles for Bell Canada and the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union representing Bell operators to reach a settlement; it has been twenty-three years so far for Canada Post and the Public Service Alliance in their equal pay case and there is no end in sight. These are only two of many examples of the failure of the current, complaint-based system.

Women employees need a new pay equity system. We need government action which respects the work that stakeholders put into the development of the Task Force Report. We need government action which will bring Canada's pay equity regime into line with its national and international human rights commitments. We need government action to recognize the contribution women workers make to our economy.

We don't need to move backwards on women's equality, which is all that the Conservative government is offering the women in Canada. The Pay Equity Network represents organizations who support women's rights to equal pay for work of equal value. Over 300 national and local organizations support the Networks call for implementation of the federal Task Force Report.

Contact: Sue Genge at 613-521-3400 extension 281 or 613-796-6765 (cell)