

ONTARIO PAY EQUITY LAW:

One million

DENIED

WORKING WOMEN IN ONTARIO FINALLY
HAVE PAY EQUITY, RIGHT?

WRONG!

Ontario's new Pay Equity Act, which came into effect January 1, 1988, was supposed to bring fairness to the pay cheques of two million women. In fact, over one million women are excluded from coverage — half of all working women in Ontario.

Ironically, most of the one million denied are those who need and deserve equal pay the most: immigrant and visible minority women, and women in jobs traditionally done by women.

Here are some of the women who won't get pay equity under this law. (The names of the women and their workplaces have been changed, but the facts have not.)

UNDER THE CURRENT LAW...

Julia Fisher is a day care worker with an Early Childhood Education Diploma working for a non-profit day care centre, Carebears Co-op. She earns \$14,000 a year. The centre's funding comes directly from the municipal government and is cost-shared by the provincial government. There are no male workers at Carebears.

Sally Shields already earns \$18,000 a year for doing exactly the same job as Julia but in a municipally-run day care centre. Under the Pay Equity Act, she will get pay equity increases totalling \$4500 over five years by comparing her job to those of male municipal workers. But because the law says male and female jobs can only be compared **within the same workplace**, Julia Fisher won't get one cent.

OUR PROPOSAL

Julia should get the same "**average adjustment**" as Sally Shields and other municipal or community college day care workers. The money would come from a **special pay equity fund** that should be set up and funded by the provincial government to provide pay equity adjustments for public sector women like Julia.

Women in libraries, nursing homes, group homes and other public agencies should be able to compare their jobs with male jobs outside the workplace but within the municipal and provincial governments that provide their funding.

Women in private sector workplaces employing mainly women should also be allowed to use comparisons outside their workplaces — by using a **benchmark** job in another factory, for example.

UNDER THE CURRENT LAW...

Maria Espinola is a sewing machine operator at Ready-Wear Fashions. She earns \$6.63 an hour after 16 years with the same non-union company. There are jobs done mainly by men at Ready-Wear. But the manufacturer is adamant that the sewing machine operator's job is not equal in value to the cutter's job, for example.

Because the law allows comparisons only between male and female jobs of **equal value**, Maria Espinola likely won't get one cent. Nor will hundreds of thousands of women working in offices, hospitals, factories, stores and other workplaces.

OUR PROPOSAL

Women like Maria should get pay equity increases by comparing their jobs with **higher-valued or lower-valued** male jobs — not just jobs of **equal value**. For example, if a female job is worth 80% less than a higher-paid male job or 20% more than a lower-paid male job, the women's wages should be increased accordingly.

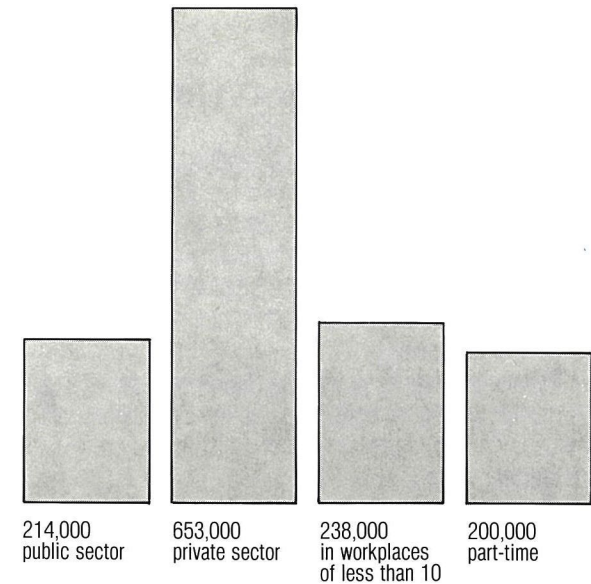


The problem is...

1. The current law recognizes only one type of **yardstick** for measuring discrimination in women's wages: a male job that's **in the same workplace** and also **worth the same** as a female job — but paid more. Maria Espinola's and Julia Fisher's work is undervalued and underpaid. They just need **different yardsticks** to measure the discrimination they face. This loophole in the Act excludes an estimated 653,000 women in the private sector and 214,000 in the public sector.
2. In private sector workplaces with less than 10 employees 238,000 women are not covered by this law.
3. The Act defines casual workers in a way that excludes 200,000 part-time workers.

Two million women are entitled to equal pay

Estimates of women excluded



Government must act now

Before the Pay Equity Act became law, unions and women's groups lobbied to have all working women covered. Peterson's Liberal government would not listen. Bob Rae and the New Democrats forced a last-minute amendment to have the Pay Equity Commission study the issue and report to the Minister of Labour within a year.

In December, 1988, unions and women's groups proposed several changes to the Pay Equity Commission:

- allow comparisons between jobs of unequal value and jobs in different workplaces;
- include women in workplaces with less than 10 employees;
- raise the minimum wage to \$8.30 an hour;
- give part-time workers the same protection and benefits as full-time workers;
- make it easier for unorganized women to unionize;
- introduce strong employment equity legislation;
- allocate special funds for pay equity increases throughout the public sector.

Government stalls

On January 16, Labour Minister Greg Sorbara released the Pay Equity Commission's report.

The Commission's own report outlined several options for government action — most of them **identical** to those proposed earlier by unions and the Equal Pay Coalition. Some require changes to the Pay Equity Act itself: the report recommends that these be studied further. But other proposals, such as raising the minimum wage, do not involve further study.

Labour Minister Greg Sorbara, however, appears happy to stall action on all fronts. He told the Legislature this issue is "far too complex" to act on without a great deal of "further study".

How you can help

The Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) and the Equal Pay Coalition believe that Ontario women have already waited far too long for equal pay. We're organizing a campaign to pressure the government to keep their promises to the women of this province.

Here's how you can help the one million denied:

- mail in the attached postcard;
- identify local cases where the Pay Equity law won't help;
- contact and work with local women's groups and the local Labour Council;
- sponsor a local conference;
- talk to your local MPP;
- make a presentation to your city/town council and ask for support;
- tell your story to the local media;
- contact Judy Darcy or Carrol Anne Sceviour at 416-441-2731 for help in building the campaign in your workplace or community.



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**Equal Pay
Coalition**

Premier Peterson,

Over one million women are being denied pay equity.

I stand with the Equal Pay Coalition and the Ontario Federation of Labour and call on you to:

- 1. amend the Pay Equity Act to cover the women who are excluded;**
- 2. raise the minimum wage and amend employment standards and labour relations laws to promote economic equality for women.**

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Postal Code: _____

Union and local or other organization: _____



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