



# Pay Equity:

## *It's still an issue*

**O**n average, women still earn less than men, regardless of their occupation. For Aboriginal and racially visible women, the wage gap is even wider. And, pay discrimination continues to take its toll when women retire.

Statistics from the federal Pay Equity Task Force Report issued in 2004 show:

- Overall, women earn 71% of the amount earned by men in comparable jobs;
- Aboriginal women earn 46%;
- racially visible women earn 64%; and
- retired women on CPP/QPP receive 58% of the benefits compared to men.

Pay inequity contributes to poverty and economic dependence with devastating health and social consequences. Pay equity legislation helps to compensate women for historic and systemic discrimination and help women achieve real equality.

## **A new law is long overdue**

PSAC has been filing pay equity complaints under Section 11 of the CHRA since its inception. Our experience, and that of other unions, has shown that the current law is not being enforced. More devastating is the fact that federal employers are prepared to pour their resources into fighting its application, rather than paying fair wages.

## **The current law doesn't work for many reasons**

As many PSAC members know only too well, the current complaint process takes far too long. It took almost 16 years for the PSAC's case against Treasury Board to be resolved. A complaint filed against Canada Post over 22 years ago is now going to Court because the employer has filed for a judicial review of the Human Rights Tribunal's decision which supported the PSAC's complaint that our members were suffering pay discrimination.

Under the current law, complaints take so many years to resolve that only large unions can afford to file complaints and see them to the end. Women in non-union workplaces are just out of luck.

There are no mechanisms available now to maintain pay equity except to file new complaints and start another lengthy and expensive process all over again.

The current law doesn't correct systemic problems. The federal government, for example, is still using classification standards that are not gender-neutral and produced the discriminatory wage rates in the first place.

## There is a better way

The federal Pay Equity Task Force Report, entitled *Pay Equity: A New Approach to a Fundamental Right*, identified a number of steps which need to be taken to address the situation. The Task Force called on the federal government to:

- 1 Recognize that pay equity is a fundamental human right.
- 2 Adopt a new proactive pay equity law that will cover women as well as racially visible workers, Aboriginal workers and workers with disabilities.
- 3 Require that all federally regulated employers adopt a pay equity plan that will include all workers whether they work full or part-time, temporary or casual.
- 4 Require employers, unions and workers' representatives to examine pay systems to make sure they are based on the principle of equal pay for work of equal value.
- 5 Establish a new Pay Equity Commission and a Pay Equity Tribunal.

## Party positions

### **Bloc Quebecois:**

Bloc MPs have spoken out in Parliament in support of pay equity and the need for proactive legislation.

### **Conservative Party:**

During the last Parliament, no Conservative MP spoke in favour of implementing proactive pay equity legislation.

### **Liberal Party:**

A year and a half has passed since the Task Force issued its report. The latest promise from the Liberal government is that draft legislative proposals will be tabled in March 2006 but will be subject to further discussion by the "stakeholders" with the assistance of an independent facilitator to be named by the government. Meanwhile the government has done nothing to stop Canada Post from using the Courts to delay paying the money our members are rightfully owed.

### **New Democratic Party:**

During the last Parliament, the NDP consistently pushed the government to introduce legislation based on the Task Force report at the earliest possible date.

## Ask the candidates

Does your party support the recommendations of the Pay Equity Task Force, particularly the adoption of a new proactive pay equity law that will cover women as well as racially visible workers, Aboriginal workers and workers with disabilities?

Will your party introduce new pay equity legislation without delay in the first session of the new Parliament, based on the recommendations of the Pay Equity Task Force, including full funding for a new Pay Equity Commission and a Pay Equity Tribunal?



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