



MAKE YOUR STORY HEARD.....

12 steps to close the gender pay gap by 2025.

The Coalition is calling for the following 12 action steps to close the gender gap by 2025. These 12 steps (not ranked in order) are a mere starting point in the consultation process. Much more work needs to be done. Under each step below are some suggestions about actions which can be taken by governments, businesses and unions to close the gender pay gap. *Let the Gender Wage Gap Steering Committee know how you think such suggestions and actions might help your situation and consider if you have any other ideas for action steps.*

How do we get to 0% Gender Pay Gap by 2025?

STEP 1 Treat closing the gap as a human rights priority

Discriminatory pay gaps are a violation of human rights. The right of women to equal pay for work of equal value and equal treatment in pay and employment opportunities are internationally recognized human rights and labour standards.

Closing the gender pay gap has not been a priority in public policy and employer practices. That has to change. Women's right to equal pay and employment opportunities is not a "frill" or a "perk" to be ignored when inconvenient or costly.

Human rights enforcement is not a partisan issue. It is a legal fundamental obligation of all those who govern, regardless of their party, to co-operate to take the necessary human rights measures to close the pay gap.

STEP 2 Raise awareness through annual Equal Pay Days and education

Unfortunately, the gender pay gap is not a matter for the history books. There is a need to raise awareness about the gender pay gap in order to ignite action to close it. Equal Pay Day represents the fact that women in Ontario on average must work more than 15 months into the new year in order to earn what men earn on average by the end of the previous year. The Ontario Government and all municipal councils should enshrine an annual Equal Pay Day in April each year. Businesses should embed awareness of the closing gender pay gap in business vision, values and goals. Ontario would merely follow the Annual Pay Days in the US, EU, and Australia. Awareness of pay and employment equity issues and compliance should also be embedded in educational curriculum for students.

STEP 3 Develop the "Close the gender pay gap by 2025 Plan"

The Coalition calls on Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, NDP Official Opposition leader Andrew Horwath and Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown to work with the

Coalition, employers, trade unions and other equality seeking stakeholders to develop, implement and resource a province-wide plan to close Ontario's gender pay gap by 2025. Ending the gender pay gap by 2025 requires a clear action plan with realistic and timely goals, targets and resources.

Solving a persistent problem requires leadership and planning - analyzing what works, what doesn't and what further steps or revisions to a plan are necessary. Governments enshrine planning mechanisms into their governance mechanisms for key public policy issues such as health care and they economy, they have not done so for pay equality. Legislators and policy makers need to incorporate a pay equity impact analysis into their decision-making.

STEP 4 Enforce and expand pay equity laws

Pay equity laws and policies are directed at ensuring that men and women are paid equally where they do work of equal value. Employment equity laws and policies are directed at ensuring that steps are taken to remove barriers and take positive measures to give women equal access to higher paying, often male-dominated work. Employment standards and labour laws set the minimum floor of rights and access for employees to a voice in the workplace. These three sets of laws and policies are necessary to work together close the gender pay gap. All employers must comply with the existing *Pay Equity Act*, *Employment Standards Act*, *the Labour Relations Act* and *Human Rights Code* obligations.

A new pay transparency standard would require employers to report and post the hourly wage and pay structures, any merit pay systems, the occupation and the nature of the employment relationship (such as part-time, contract, temporary agency).

Modernize the *Employment Standards Act* Equal Pay for Equal Work sections. The Coalition recommends that, given that women are the majority of workers in a non-standard employment relationship, the ESA should be amended to ensure part-time, part-year, contract, temporary agency workers are paid the same rate as full-time workers.

Ontario delivers public services through its own employees or through transfer payment agencies without providing proper funding to ensure pay equity is both achieved and maintained for those doing women's work. The pay equity adjustments that are owed to women working to provide public services to Ontarians require full funding.

There is a need to restore sufficient funding to the Pay Equity Commission to carry out its important tasks. The Government must introduce effective and fully-staffed enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance with the *Act*.

STEP 5 Implement employment equity law and policies

Pay disparities faced by racialized women, aboriginal women and women with disabilities are greater. Access to better paying jobs is a critical step in closing the gender pay gap.

Employment equity laws and policies should be implemented requiring employers to plan to end discriminatory practices facing women, racialized and aboriginal peoples, people living with disabilities and others who are similarly disadvantaged.

It's time to reintroduce Ontario's repealed *Employment Equity Act*. This proactive legislation helped to redress workplace discrimination in recruitment, employment conditions and retention against women, racialized workers, aboriginal peoples and persons with disabilities – all major factors contributing to the gender pay gap.

STEP 6 Promote access to collective bargaining

Unionization is one of the most effective tools to close the gender pay gap. One reason that the pay gap has decreased over the years is the increasing unionization of women, particularly in the public sector. The “union advantage” in pay is on average \$5.11 per hour compared to non-unionized workers. Unions have a joint role with employers to create pay equity plans and unionized women were much more likely to receive pay equity adjustments which helped to close the gap with their male co-workers performing work of comparable value. However, unionization rates are declining, particularly in the private sector. The rise of precarious employment relationships, such as short-term contract, temporary agency and other forms has weakened the trade union representation of women .

The *Labour Relations Act* must be amended to include card-based certification and expanded access to remedial certification without a vote. We question why does the construction sector, a male-dominated sector, have access to card-based certification and female-dominated sectors do not? The Coalition further supports measures to improve union access to employee information to facilitate organizing.

In order to redress the gendered wage gap and the increase in precarious work in the Ontario labour market, sectoral and broader based bargaining approaches should be implemented. For example, Australia has a system of wage awards for sectors.

STEP 7 Increase the minimum wage

Women are the majority of Ontario's 534,000 minimum wage workers. Aboriginal women, immigrant and refugee women, women with disabilities and racialized women are even more likely to be working at the minimum wage.

Any increase to statutory minimum wage laws serves as a down payment on closing the gender pay gap for vulnerable workers. The Coalition calls for the Ontario government to bring in emergency legislation to increase the minimum wage to \$15 per hour effective immediately. The minimum wage must keep up with inflation and keep on increasing until it is at the level of a living wage.

STEP 8 Provide affordable and accessible child care

Women with children earn much less money. Many women work part-time because of lack of affordable child care. In 1988, the Government fully recognized that access to an affordable child care program was a cornerstone to ensure women's equality.

Despite many other reports calling for affordable, high quality child care, we have made little progress in access to a child care program. In Ontario, there are licensed spaces for just 1 in 5 children and fees are upwards of \$40 to \$60 per day, per child. The time for a program is now.

STEP 9 Mainstream equity compliance into government laws and policies

Public policies often use an approach which assumes all employees face "similar" or "neutral" circumstances to predominantly able-bodied, white, male workers. There is a systemic failure to account for the different and unequal circumstances facing women and particularly those who racialized, Aboriginal, have disabilities or are poor.

All social and economic policies should be vetted by government departments for their impact, answering this question: *do they help close or widen gender pay gaps?*

Cabinet policy submissions should include a sign off to ensure proposed laws and policies have been reviewed for their contribution to closing these pay gaps. Labour market knowledge, research and monitoring that is sensitive to human rights is key to an effectively ending the gender wage gap.

STEP 10 Mainstream equity compliance into workplaces and businesses.

Employers also need to mainstream equity compliances into their workplace practices, including analyzing the impact recruitment and retention practices as well as pay and promotion structures and conditions of work have on vulnerable groups. The pay transparency law above is a starting point to make this happen.

STEP 11 End Violence and Harassment of Women

Sexual violence and harassment is connected to gender inequality and contributes to the gender wage gap. A woman who is the victim of assault or harassed out of a job is left with few economic resources. The closing the gender wage gap strategy needs to respond to the root causes of violence, including education, employment, and poverty. The Ontario government designed a targeted strategy to end Gender-based violence. This strategy needs to be continued. There is no reason why Ontario doesn't create its own task force examining the disproportionate rates of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in the province as part of the strategy to end gender inequality.

STEP 12 Secure Decent Work for Women Across the Economic Spectrum

It is time for the Ontario government to commit to the Decent work agenda. For almost four decades, the notion of labour market "flexibility" has been one-sided. The employer's main emphasis is to cut costs and find ways to reduce the unit cost of labour. The employment relationships most strongly associated with women and dominated by women, the precarious forms of part-time, contract, and temporary, have taken hold as the new model. The precarious labour market means predominantly lower wages, less access to benefits, holiday pay, overtime pay, pensions, severance pay and employment insurance. In today's labour market, there is little balance between the power of employers and the many precariously employed women.

For women who are truly own-account self-employed entrepreneurs, not disguised employees, the government needs to ensure that measures are in place to assist such women in gaining access to grants and business development assistance, in a similar way to male dominated entrepreneurs have access to economic development grants.