



474 Bathurst Street, Suite 300, Toronto, Ontario M5T 2S6
Tel: 416-964-1115 Fax: 416-964-5895 Email: info@equalpaycoalition.org
www.equalpaycoalition.org

MEDIA RELEASE

SEPTEMBER 17 – WOMEN WORK FOR FREE DAY (Toronto, 2008 – 09 – 17)

Remember Tax Free day in July? For women, September 17 is “Now You’re Working for Free Day”. It is 71% of the way through the year and a red letter day for Ontario women who earn on average 71 cents for every dollar men earn. But for women, it is far from financial freedom.

With an overall 29% gender pay gap, women are effectively denied their fair pay from now until the end of the year while men get their full pay. Racial minority women, women with disabilities, married women and older women face an even greater pay gap and so their working for free day starts even earlier in the year. Employers, including governments, get the benefit of women’s work without having to pay its full value.

Much of the 29% pay gap results from the undervaluation of women’s work compared to men’s work caused by prejudice and stereotyping and women’s segregation in low paid job ghettos. This is discrimination and violates ILO Convention 100 - Equal Pay For Work of Equal Value, ratified by Canada in 1972.

Ontario’s *Pay Equity Act* which is 20 years old this year was supposed to end this de-valuation by requiring employers to pay women’s and men’s jobs the same where they were of comparable value. The *Act* helped to reduce the pay gap from 38% in 1988 to 29% now. But 29% is still way too high. Canada ranks 17th among 22 OECD countries on this issue and behind the United States which has a 23% pay gap. By comparison, the pay gap is 10% in Sweden - a country with strong pro-active pay equity laws, family friendly work policies and high unionization rates..

The World Economic Forum’s 2007 Global Gender Gap Report highlighted the key role gender “remuneration gaps” play in preventing economies from realizing their full potential. Businesses, communities and governments need strong pay equity enforcement. Pay equity enforcement needs to be revitalized for Ontario to grow strong and prosperous.

The Coalition is encouraging Ontario women to write the Premier and their M.P.P. and tell them to act now so they don’t have to work for free a substantial part of every year. In its 20th Anniversary Campaign, the Equal Pay Coalition, with its organizations representing over 1 million Ontarians, has conducted a province-wide campaign with thousands of working women signing postcards calling on the Government to take all necessary steps to close the gap. This includes: 1) increasing the minimum wage to \$10 per hour immediately as a pay equity downpayment; 2) full public funding of public sector pay equity adjustments; and 3) full funding of the Commission, the Tribunal and legal support services for women claimants, especially for those in the private sector where compliance is low and the pay gap is higher. Women are being urged to contact their union or the

Commission if they believe they are being paid unfairly.

To date, the Ontario Government has taken no action. It's time to hold the Government and Ontario's employers accountable for pay equity compliance.

-30-

The Equal Pay Coalition was formed in 1976. Its call for urgent action is backed by its broad-based membership of trade unions, community and social justice organizations, and business and professional women's organizations who represent over one million Ontarians. See www.equalpaycoalition.org for a list of our members and further background information.

For more information, contact: Mary Cornish, Chair, Equal Pay Coalition, (416) 964-5524, mcornish@cavalluzzo.com.

Background statistics:

- Racial minority women earn 36% less than men.
- Aboriginal women earn 54% less.
- Women with disabilities earn much less than women and men without disabilities.
- Married women have the widest pay gap at 33%.
- Retired women's median income being almost half that of retired men.