



**ONTARIO
EQUAL PAY COALITION**
CLOSE THE GENDER PAY GAP

SENT BY EMAIL: mhunter.mpp@liberal.ola.org

15 May 2017

Hon. Mitzie Hunter
Ministry of Education
22nd Floor, Mowat Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Hunter,

Re: The Changing Workplaces Review and the Gender Wage Gap

Reports in the *Toronto Star* and on the *CBC* over the past few days indicate that Cabinet is considering significant changes to labour and employment laws to increase protection for workers. The final report from the *Changing Workplaces Review* has not yet been publicly released. However, *CBC* on 13 May reported that “Officials said the government will announce the reforms it intends to make soon after the release”. On behalf of the Equal Pay Coalition, we are writing to underscore the importance of ensuring that the government’s response to the *Changing Workplaces Review* delivers real legislative protection and rights enforcement that will secure equality and decent work for the women -- Indigenous workers, racialized workers, workers with disabilities and migrant workers – who are among the most precarious workers in Ontario.

The Premier’s Mandate letters in 2016 underscores that as the Minister of Education you are to collaborate with the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Labour and other Cabinet colleagues to develop the government’s strategy to support women’s economic empowerment and to close the gender wage gap. The Minister of Labour’s Mandate letter expressly sets out the following mandate:

Working with the ministers of Women’s Issues, Finance, Economic Development and Growth, **Education**, and Advanced Education and Skills

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Development, develop a strategy for the economic empowerment of women that addresses the needs of women at all economic levels. As part of this empowerment strategy, you will work with the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues and Associate Minister of Education (Early Years and Child Care) to develop a Gender Wage Gap strategy that will provide practical recommendations by spring 2018 to close the wage gap between women and men. In order to map out this plan, you will consult with stakeholders including leaders in the business, labour, human resources and equality-advocacy communities to garner practical input and expertise.

The Minister of Finance's Mandate letter echoes this mandate:

Working together with the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues and the Minister of Labour, and working with the President of the Treasury Board and the ministers of Economic Development and Growth, Advanced Education and Skills Development, and **Education**, develop a long-term strategy to support the economic empowerment of women that addresses the needs of women at all economic levels.

Your own Mandate letter sets out the following responsibility:

Collaborating with ministers across government and other partners to inform the development of the plan to build a high-quality, accessible and affordable early years and child care system, and ensure this work is aligned with other strategies and initiatives across government, such as the development of a Gender Wage Gap strategy and government-wide approach to the economic empowerment of women.

Now is the time to act on that mandate and commitment.

Bringing a gender lens to your contemplated policy and legislative changes reveals the need for specific actions to ensure women are fully valued in their participation in the labour market. Among the specific actions connected with the *Changing Workplaces Review* mandate that would help close the gender pay gap are:

- * to immediately increase the minimum wage to \$15 per hour with no sub-minimum wage rates;
- * to legislate guaranteed protection for at least 7 days paid sick leave, 10 days unpaid emergency leave and 3 weeks of paid vacation for all workers;
- * to legislate protection for paid leave for survivors of domestic and sexual violence;
- * to legislate protection for at least two weeks advanced scheduling notice;

- * to legislate equal pay and benefits for equal work so that part-time, casual, contract and temporary agency workers are paid the same as full-time workers;
- * to legislate protections to ensure that all workers are guaranteed employment standards protection: expanding the definition of “employee” to include all workers in order to end practices of misclassifying workers to avoid minimum standards; ending exemptions from ESA protection; and imposing joint and several liability for related and joint employers;
- * to legislate just cause protection for workers covered by the ESA;
- * to ensure meaningful protection for the constitutionally protected rights to unionize, engage in collective bargaining and exercise the right to strike, including by restoring card-check certification, allowing for the consolidation of bargaining units represented by the same union, providing a framework for broader-based bargaining, providing access to first contract arbitration and extending successor rights to protect workers from contract flipping; and
- * to invest resources to ensure robust, proactive enforcement of employment standards and prosecute employers who flout the law.

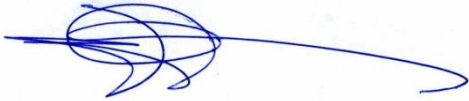
As part of these changes, the Coalition calls for new mechanisms to increase pay transparency as we detailed in the [Pay Transparency to Close the Gender Pay Gap](#) that we released on Equal Pay Day. These proposed legislative protections may be introduced to the *Employment Standards Act*. Mandatory pay transparency will enable workers to know the pay structure in their workplaces. Making such information publicly available will help reveal the gender pay gap and enhance the enforcement of basic rights.

The Equal Pay Coalition will provide its further analysis when the *Changing Workplaces Review* is released but we are writing now as it appears that government decision-making will precede the public release of that important report.

There are many systemic practices that create and sustain the gender pay gap. The response to the *Changing Workplaces Review* is an important generational opportunity to guarantee meaningful protection to support women’s economic security and close the gender pay gap. But legislative and policy reform must extend beyond this initiative. The government must continue to commit itself to a multi-dimensional legislative and policy response that is informed by a gender and equity based analysis to ensure that those who are most marginalized have real support for decent work and decent lives. The Equal Pay Coalition in its 2016 report [Securing Human Rights Justice for Women’s Work](#) and in its [12 Steps to Close the Gender Pay Gap](#) has mapped out concrete changes that are needed to address women’s economic security and close the gender pay gap.

We look forward to hearing your response and would be pleased to meet with you to discuss how you plan to meet your mandate to close the gender pay gap and to discuss the resources that you are prepared to commit to ensure the gender pay gap is closed.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Fay Faraday and Jan Borowy
Co-Chairs