



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

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15 May 2017

Minister Indira Naidoo-Harris  
Ministry for the Status of Women  
11th Floor  
80 Grosvenor Street  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1E9

Dear Minister Naidoo-Harris,

**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.

In your capacity as the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, your Mandate letter from the Premier underscores your responsibility to lead the government’s active steps to support women’s economic empowerment, close the gender wage gap, and bring a gendered analysis to all law and policy development:

**Support Women’s Economic Empowerment**

Lead the development of a government-wide approach to the economic empowerment of women that addresses the needs of women at all economic levels, in partnership with the Ministers of Labour, Finance, Education,

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Economic Development and Growth, and Advanced Education and Skills Development, by spring 2017, and continue to collaborate with key partners to implement this approach.

Seek advice from the Women in Business Steering Committee and work with the Minister of Finance to develop a comprehensive plan to implement the strategy on Gender Diversity on Boards in Canada, by spring 2017. This would include plans to implement the target that women make up at least 40 per cent of all appointments to provincial boards and agencies by 2019.

In partnership with the Minister of Labour, assist with the development of a Gender Wage Gap strategy that will provide practical recommendations by spring 2018 to close the wage gap between women and men.

### **Ensure a Gender Lens is Brought to the Development of Government Policies and Programs**

Lead the development of gender-based analysis to be applied to support and inform the development of policies and programs across government.

### **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.

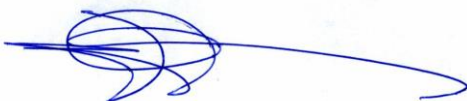
As part of these changes, the Coalition calls for new mechanisms to increase pay transparency as we detailed in the [Pay Transparency to Close the Gender Pay Gap](#) that we released on Equal Pay Day. These proposed legislative protections may be introduced to the *Employment Standards Act*. Mandatory 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

cc: Adrienne Lipsey