

30 Years and still waiting:

An OPSEU developmental services plan to achieve proxy pay equity

OPSEU is taking the fight for pay equity to the public with a sector-wide campaign. Our slogan, “Pay equity now! 30 years and still waiting” perfectly captures how fed up we all are that pay equity still isn’t a reality for so many workers in developmental services.

We will be airing radio ads, starting a petition, lobbying local MPPs, and spreading our message through social media.

The aim of this campaign is to get Premier Kathleen Wynne’s attention, and make her enforce pay equity law NOW. We know there is a funding crisis in developmental services. If the Premier doesn’t enforce pay equity, then employers will continue treating women as discount labour by neglecting their pay equity obligations.

Stay tuned into the campaign by visiting payequitynow.org.

1. What is pay equity?

The Pay Equity Act became law in Ontario in 1988. This law requires employers to identify and correct gender discrimination in their pay practices.

If you are an employee in Ontario, your employer is required to provide you with information about pay equity in your workplace. Pay equity is your right – and your employer’s legal obligation.

2. How does it work?

In pay equity calculations, jobs are grouped into job classes. Classes consist of jobs with similar recruitment practices, duties, and responsibilities and have the same compensation schedule/salary grid. These classes are identified as male, female, or neutral.

A female job class is one with at least 60 per cent of the positions held by women. A male

job class is one with at least 70 per cent of the positions held by men.

Job information is gathered about the male and female job classes: each job class is valued by skill, effort, responsibility, and working conditions. Factors such as historical gender of workers in a given class, and gender stereotypes (e.g., secretaries are female; engineers are male) can also be considered when classifying jobs.

Once all job classes are valued, female job classes are compared to male job classes. Where the values are comparable, the wages of the female job class must be at least equal to the job rate of the comparable male job’s wages. If the female job class’s wages are lower, the employer must make adjustments to bring them up to those of the male job class.

Your union negotiates this process with the employer.



3. Why is the Act necessary?

In Ontario, the pay gap between men and women is still about 28 per cent (based on full-time, full-year wages). Many factors explain the gap, but one is gender discrimination in the workplace

4. Is pay equity the same as equal pay for equal work?

No. equal pay for equal work means that if a man and a woman are doing the same work, they must be paid the same. Pay equity compares jobs usually done by women to different jobs of equal value that are usually done by men.

5. What does proxy mean?

Some developmental services workplaces are female-dominated, or all female. In these cases, female to male job comparisons cannot be done in the workplace, and so another, comparable workplace that has achieved pay equity must be used instead. The other workplace is called the “proxy.” For Community Living Tillsonburg, Victoria Hospital in London is the comparable workplace.

6. Is pay equity only for women?

No. The Act covers male and female workers in female job classes of all public sector employers and of private sector employers with 10 or more employees. This includes

both full- and part-time, as well as seasonal, workers. It does not include students working during vacations.

7. Who enforces the pay equity process?

The Pay Equity Commission is responsible for enforcing the Act. The Commission receives complaints from employers, employees, and unions about non-compliance.

A review officer at the Pay Equity Office will investigate a complaint, and try to settle the dispute. The officer may make a decision on the dispute, or refer the case to the Pay Equity Hearings Tribunal if the order issued is not followed.

The Pay Equity Hearings Tribunal’s decisions on pay equity disputes are final.

8. Will pay equity bankrupt my agency?

No. A compliant employer does not need to spend more than one per cent of total payroll in a year to meet its pay equity obligations. It’s when an employer goes years without making payments that the lump sum owing seems like a lot.

9. Why are some agencies willing/able to pay and others are not?

Good question.

Authorized for distribution by:

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Questions about pay equity and your local plan?
Contact your OPSEU Staff Representative.

Pay Equity
NOW
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