



October 6, 2007

Ms. Mary Cornish  
Chair  
Equal Pay Coalition  
474 Bathurst Street  
Suite 300  
Toronto, ON  
M5T 2S6

Dear Ms. Cornish:

Thank you for your inquiry about the Ontario Liberals' commitment to ensuring economic independence and economic equality for women workers. I am pleased to outline our record and future plans on this important topic.

It was the Ontario Liberal government, working hand in hand with the Equal Pay Coalition and women across the province, that enacted the groundbreaking *Pay Equity Act*. As you are aware, the Conservative federal government subsequently tried to gut that legislation both by capping pay equity payments and by attempting to repeal the proxy comparison method.

Over the past four years, we have worked hard to inform women of their rights under pay equity — and employers of their obligations. In November of 2005, we developed the *You Are Worth It: Pay Equity, Equal Pay for Equal Work and Salary Negotiation Skills* training module to provide women with information on their workplace rights with respect to pay equity and equal pay for equal work. The module also teaches women basic strategies and techniques for talking to their employer about pay and negotiating salary.

In the fall of 2006, we launched web-based pay equity training tools to improve efficiency and reduce the cost to employers of implementing pay equity. The anticipated increased compliance with the act, achieved through education and awareness, will be of benefit to women workers.

In addition, to help all workers understand their rights under the *Employment Standards Act*, the Ministry of Labour now produces information in 23 different languages and has partnered with various community groups to ensure information gets into the hands of those who need it.

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We have also demonstrated our commitment to women workers in other ways, such as:

- Increasing the minimum wage from \$6.85 to \$8.00, after the previous Conservative froze it for eight years; we will raise it to \$10.25/hour by 2010.
- Creating the Ontario Child Benefit (OCB) which, when fully implemented, will provide \$1,100 more annually for each child in low-income families. Families received the first OCB payments in July of 2007. All the changes we have made since 2003, including the minimum wage increases, mean that a single mother with two children working for minimum wage will be up to \$10,000 better off annually when the OCB is fully implemented.
- Amending the *Employment Standards Act, 2000* to create Family Medical Leave, which allows employees covered by the act to take up to eight weeks of an unpaid leave of absence to provide care or support to family members who meet the criteria. In October 2006, a new regulation was created to expand eligibility to include additional family members and persons who consider the employee to be like a family member. These amendments are expected to be of particular benefit to women, as over 61 per cent of family caregivers in Canada are women, and two-thirds of those are in the paid workforce. Almost one million Canadian women aged 24 to 54 provide care to both a child and a senior.
- Passing the *Ending Mandatory Retirement Statute Law Amendment Act, 2005* to eliminate the ability of Ontario employers to require employees to retire at age 65. The new legislative provisions, which came into effect on December 12, 2006, are expected to benefit women whose careers began late or were interrupted due to child care and other responsibilities.
- Passing the *Employment Standards Amendment Act (Hours of Work and Other Matters), 2004* to eliminate the 60-hour work-week. Workers are able to decide, without undue pressure, whether to work extra hours.

You may also be interested to know that we have addressed child care, poverty and housing in the Ontario Liberal platform, setting out clear next steps to build on the progress we have made to date. We recognize that child care is often one of the most significant barriers for women's employment opportunities. We will appoint an early learning advisor to advise on the implementation of full-day

preschool. This will allow us to extend our public education agenda to the early years — and will also free up over 20,000 child care spaces and 8,000 child care subsidies. We will develop a poverty-reduction strategy centred around the OCB. And, finally, we will develop a comprehensive housing strategy to continue to address the pressing needs in this area.

Ms. Cornish, thank you again for writing and allowing me to address the issues of concern to Equal Pay Coalition. Know that Ontario Liberals are dedicated to continuing to work with you and other stakeholders on achieving equality for women in Ontario. We hope to have that opportunity in a second mandate, and we ask for your members' support on October 10.

Please accept my best wishes.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dalton McGuinty". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dalton McGuinty  
Leader of the Ontario Liberal Party  
Premier