

**PSAC Declaration for  
International Women's Day  
March 8, 2009**

***Working Toward Women's Equality!***

The Conservative government has been systematically chipping away at women's rights since taking power in 2006. In the budget it tabled last January, the government took aim specifically at pay equity for women employed in the federal public service. On the occasion of International Women's Day, PSAC is denouncing the sexist and discriminatory policies of the Harper government.

**Child care**

Child care is clearly not a priority for this government. In fact, Canada ranks last among developed countries when it comes to the number of available child care spaces. Public funding earmarked for child care services and early childhood education doesn't even come close to meeting the need.

In spite of broad consensus that a \$2.2 billion investment is urgently needed, the Harper government refused to allocate a portion of its 2009 budget to funding of child care services. This decision will have dramatic repercussions across the country.

It is estimated that 22,000 child care spots will be lost in Ontario due to a lack of federal funding. PSAC believes that Canada needs a universal child care system now. This is crucial to ensuring equality for women. We must continue to pressure the federal government so that we win this make-or-break battle!

**Pay equity**

As part of the 2009 budget, the federal government introduced a bill to supposedly "modernize" pay equity for women employed in the federal public service. In fact, the new law restricts the scope of pay equity so that fewer women are entitled to it. These new "equitable compensation" rules will relegate pay equity to the bargaining table and take it out of the human rights domain.

As a result, women in the public service will no longer be able to take their case to the Human Rights Commission when they feel that they are not being given equal pay for work of equal value. What's worse is that unions are prohibited from helping their members make complaints, under threat of a \$50,000 fine.

Pay equity, however, is a fundamental human right, which means it should not be negotiable. When all is said and done, the employer always has control over working conditions and salaries. In the federal system, Treasury Board has been

putting off a review of its classification systems for more than a decade, which ultimately determines how women will be compensated. The notion that equality could be guaranteed through negotiations where the employer holds the balance of power is just absurd.

PSAC is fighting hard against the Public Service Equitable Compensation Act, demanding that Parliament remove it from the budget bill. Government officials have admitted that there was no proof that the new pay equity rules would save the government any money. But the Harper Conservatives are insisting on shoving the law into the omnibus budget bill, making it a matter of confidence on which the government could fall.

The NDP and the Bloc Québécois are attempting to remove the pay equity bill from the Budget Implementation Act. PSAC members across Canada are putting pressure on the Liberals to support the initiative, urging them not to sell out pay equity for women in the federal public sector.

PSAC will continue to fight against this regressive law and insist that the federal government follow the 2004 recommendations of the Pay Equity Task Force. Canadian women deserve a pay equity regime that is truly proactive and will ensure equal pay for work of equal value. The fight is not over.

### **Equality and justice now!**

In November 2008, the United Nations criticized Canada for failing to meet its commitments under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. As was the case in 2003, the CEDAW Committee believes Canada is not doing enough and must adopt special measures to promote the equality of women, particularly when it comes to pay equity.

**On this International Women's Day, we demand that the federal government:**

- **Respect women's rights by guaranteeing equal benefits and equal protection to all women.**
- **Review its budget policies so that women can actually receive their fair share of public funding and benefit equally from stimulus spending.**
- **Provide adequate funding for a universal public child care system.**
- **Scrap the *Public Service Equitable Compensation Act* and implement the recommendations of the Pay Equity Task Force.**