

Five things you can do right now to help women achieve economic equality ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

I've got my pussyhat. I'm ready to march. To strike. To get to work.

Or I could stay home. And watch Netflix.

What would happen if we all just called it a day? What if we said, 'meh, close enough ladies'? What price would we pay?

Right now, women's employment levels fall 7% below men's. Closing that gap would see women putting an additional \$8.7 billion into our economy annually. Or we could just hang out.

Women are twice as likely to work part-time as men. More than 700,000 women are working part-time for non-voluntary reasons. If those 700,000 women were working full time, they would have earned an additional \$20.6 billion in wages last year. But who needs the headache?

Women across employment sectors, at every age and education level, are paid less than men. Indigenous, racialized and immigrant women are paid even less than non-Indigenous, non-immigrant women. Women with disabilities, likewise. If just the women who worked full-time last year earned the same hourly wage that their full-time male counterparts earned, they would have taken home an additional \$42 billion. You know, for stuff and things.

\$71.3 billion a year. That is the cost of doing nothing.

But if you feel like putting on your pussyhat and stepping out, here are a few things you could ask your government to do, right now, to make a difference to women's economic security:

1. Invest in a publicly managed system of high-quality, universal childcare.

Result: more women will be able to move back into paid work. Part-time workers will have access to full-time work. Single parents will not continue to face one of the highest poverty rates of any group in Canada. (Estimated cost: \$1.6 billion).

2. Invest in the sectors where women work.

Result: putting as much money into social infrastructure as we are currently investing in physical infrastructure will produce a higher employment level for women and a diversified and thus more stable economy. (Estimated cost: \$4 billion).

3. Table pro-active pay equity legislation today.

Result: greater economic security for women, economic growth that lessens inequality rather than contributing to it and increased government revenues. (Estimated cost: \$10 million).

4. Balance the share of unpaid work. Introduce use it or lose it leave for the non-birthing parent on the Quebec model.

Result: In Quebec 76% of fathers now take leave, compared to 26% of men in the rest of Canada. Women and men share the benefits and burdens of doing unpaid care work.

5. Implement a national action plan to end violence against women.

Result: women are safe both in their homes and in their workplaces and survivors of violence are adequately supported. (Estimated cost: \$500 million).

That may sound like a lot, but it's still less than nothing.

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