

Sweeping list of recommendations calls for better economic outcomes for women ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

OTTAWA - A Commons committee that spent over a year looking at economic barriers facing Canadian women has released a sweeping list of recommendations it believes could provide a path toward full equality for women.

The standing committee on the status of women tabled its report Thursday following a 15-month study of women's economic security.

It found women's employment and wage potential are being undermined in Canada by a wide variety of systemic and structural barriers, including bias, gender-based violence, the wage gap and a lack of adequate access to child care.

The report includes 86 recommendations to government for changes, including a call for immediate implementation of federal pay equity legislation and for the government to request that all provincial and territorial labour ministers do the same.

A number of recommendations also addressed the many factors that contribute to the wage gap between men and women.

Measures that would help close the gap include more support for child care, especially in rural, remote and marginalized communities, the report said. It also maintained that more flexible child care options are needed for single parents and parents who work irregular hours and shift work.

"Child care is a huge issue for women in being able to maintain their salaries as they're working," said Liberal MP Pam Damoff, one of the vice-chairs of the committee.

"Allowing women to have high quality, affordable child care that suits their needs, which is something we've recommended ... will allow them to continue to work and advance in their workplace."

NDP women's equality critic Sheila Malcolmson, a committee co-chair, said witnesses described a vicious cycle of economic injustice that face women in Canada. She wants the government to act immediately to adopt the recommendations.

The NDP also tabled a supplementary report with even more calls for change. "Women have been calling for such change for decades, it's past time for government to step up and immediately implement the recommendations," Malcolmson said.

"We've got concrete measure that the government, if it implemented now, it would be putting its money where its mouth is, it would be walking its talk on feminism and the economy and women in our country would do better."

Other recommendations in the report include: more support and study to address barriers that exist for women in male-dominated, high-income sectors; gender equity provisions on all projects and programs that receive federal funding that, if violated, would result in loss of funding; more Crown investment in women's entrepreneurship and more programs for the integration of female economic class immigrants.

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