

FTR Now

Ontario Invites Submissions on Closing Gender Wage Gap

Date: October 20, 2015

On October 8, 2015, the Ontario government invited input from individuals and organizations to assist it in developing a strategy to close the wage gap between men and women.

In this *FTR Now*, we review the government's initiative, its invitation for submissions and how Ontario employers can provide their feedback.

THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

By way of background, in 2014 the Minister of Labour (with support from the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues) was asked by the Premier to develop a Gender Wage Gap Strategy to address the overarching issue that women continue to earn less money than men, resulting in lost economic opportunities.

[A Gender Wage Gap Steering Committee](#) was struck in April 2015 with [Terms of Reference](#) which included, among other things, a mandate to identify the factors causing the gender wage gap and to "assess the impact of government actions, business practices, social norms, and other factors, on the gap."

In October 2015, the Steering Committee produced consultation papers for both [organizations](#) and [individuals](#). The Ministry of Labour also produced a background paper entitled "[Closing the Gender Wage Gap](#)".

As referenced in the consultation paper for organizations, one of the issues for consideration is whether the current legislation addressing gender wage gap issues (*Pay Equity Act*, *Employment Standards Act, 2000* and the *Human Rights Code*) sufficiently addresses the gender wage gap issue. The Steering Committee is not mandated with making any recommendations for legislative change.

Subsequent to the publication of the consultation papers, the Steering Committee will be consulting with various interested parties across Ontario. It will focus generally on the following issues:

- how the roles of women at work, in their families, and in their communities are affected by the gender wage gap
- how the gender wage gap specifically affects women in the workforce across the economic

spectrum

- ways in which government, business, labour, other organizations, and individual leaders can work together to address the conditions and the systemic barriers that contribute to the wage gap
- other factors that intersect with gender to compound the wage gap, and determine how those factors should be addressed .

The Steering Committee has invited interested parties to review the consultation materials. It will be holding [Public Townhall meetings](#) in 12 Ontario communities commencing on October 26, 2015 in York Region to seek feedback. As well, it has invited interested parties to provide feedback through written submissions. Feedback is due no later than **January 15, 2016**.

MAKING SUBMISSIONS

Employers have a vested interest in the legislation that purports to address the issue of gender wage gaps, in particular the *Pay Equity Act*. Employers may wish to review the consultation materials and make submissions to the government on the gender wage gap itself and the legislative responses to it in terms of its effectiveness and challenges for employers.

Should you wish any assistance in the preparation of the submissions or have any questions related to the consultation process, please contact [Carolyn L. Kay](#) at 416.864.7313, [Lauri A. Reesor](#) at 416.864.7288, [Craig R. Lawrence](#) at 416.864.7532, [Stephanie N. Jeronimo](#) at 416.864.7350 or your regular [Hicks Morley lawyer](#).

[1] [Ontario Seeking Public Input on Closing the Gender Wage Gap, Ontario Government News Release, October 8, 2015](#)

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