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Julia Douglas, Clerk
Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs
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Re: Pre-budget consultations 2020

Spend Smarter – Cut the Legal Fees

Over a year ago in September 2018, the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO) found the Ontario government responsible for discriminating against midwives by not providing compensation that is free of gender bias. The Tribunal decision came after a protracted legal battle where government chose to spend tax dollars on lawyers and legal fees for five years instead of paying fair wages to midwives. Now, government is appealing the decision; another choice that funnels money into legal battles instead of paying fair compensation. **The provincial government can spend smarter by ceasing their appeal of the Tribunal's pay equity decision.** Ontario midwives have been subjected to gender discrimination in compensation. Instead of spending valuable taxpayer dollars on protracted legal proceedings, ongoing since 2013, the provincial government would be smarter to invest in closing the pay equity gap.

Smarter for the Economy – Close the Pay Gap

Compensation free of discrimination has beneficial economic benefits for everyone. This is supported by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) regarding pay equity in the Canadian context: the OECD projected that “narrowing the gap between men and women’s employment in Canada by 50% could contribute an additional \$160 billion to our economy by 2030. Moreover, the World Bank suggests that closing the gender wage gap could be worth the equivalent of 10% of Canada’s GDP.”¹ The savings from not appealing the decision can help the Ontario government deliver on its commitment to ensure services people rely upon every day, such as midwifery care, are delivered with prudence and care.

Right now, the gender pay gap in Ontario is 30%. Women on average earn only 70 cents on the male dollar. The pay equity gap for Ontario midwives is at least 48% because midwifery is so deeply associated with women. However, the pay gap is not just about gender. The gap increases when intersecting with other forms of discrimination such as those experienced by people who are Indigenous, racialized, immigrants, elderly, Two-Spirit, queer or lesbian, transgender or non-binary

¹ Vandenbeld, A. It’s time to act: report of the special committee on pay equity. The House of Commons [Internet]. Canada: 42nd Parliament, House of Commons, June 2016. Available from: <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/ESPE/Reports/RP8320461/esperp01/esperp01-e.pdf>

people, and women with disabilities.² Midwives live with a gender penalty imposed on their compensation by government every time they provide care. In this budget the government can close the pay equity gap.

Smarter for the Progressive Conservative Party – Champion Pay Equity

The Progressive Conservative government is poised to champion pay equity in a tangible way and be celebrated for their leadership. By honouring the Tribunal's decision and closing the pay gap, the provincial government will demonstrate that they are committed to fueling the economy and igniting a smarter government for the twenty-first century that is invested in all workers. The provincial government can spend smarter by honouring the final HRTO liability decision and closing the wage gap for midwives in a timely and cost-effective way while raising their profile as a government dedicated to removing roadblocks to a thriving economy.

Thank you for considering the Association of Ontario Midwives' recommendations for the 2020 Budget.

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² Ontario Equal Pay Coalition. Equal Pay Coalition [Internet]. Toronto: Ontario Equal Pay Coalition; 2017. Calculating the pay gap. Available from: <http://equalpaycoalition.org/calculating-the-pay-gap/>.