



UFCW Canada submission to
The House of Commons
Standing Committee on
the Status of Women regarding
**The Economic Security
of Women in Canada**



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**UFCW CANADA SUBMISSION TO
THE HOUSE OF COMMONS STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
REGARDING THE ECONOMIC SECURITY OF WOMEN IN CANADA**

On behalf of the members of UFCW Canada, we welcome the opportunity to make recommendations to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women on how to improve the economic security of women in Canada and ensure the equal participation of women in the Canadian economy.

UFCW Canada (United Food and Commercial Workers) is the country's most progressive private-sector union, representing more than 250,000 workers throughout Canada. We are the leading force for workers in the retail, food processing, hospitality, and security sectors. Over 50 percent of UFCW Canada members are women. Forty percent of our members are younger than 30-years-old. Close to 10,000 UFCW Canada members work in federally regulated sectors. UFCW Canada members work in transportation, at Canadian Forces bases, credit unions, in security, in the fisheries sector, in the milling sector (including flour, grain & malt), in the mining sector, and in other federally regulated workplaces.

Regarding closing the gender wage gap, we applaud the federal government's commitment to take action – including actions to reduce occupational segregation, reduce women's poverty, and actions to eliminate sexual harassment and violence in the workplace.

UFCW Canada recommends the following actions the government can implement now to help close the gender gap:

- Make closing the gender wage gap a human rights priority.
- We call for a proactive federal pay equity law modeled on the recommendations of the 2004 Pay Equity Task Force. UFCW joins other trade unions and pay equity advocates in calling for legislation this year.
- We call on the federal government to legislate a living wage. Women dominate low-wage, precarious work. One in three women earns less than \$15 per hour, compared to one in five men.
- We call on the government to address the barriers in accessing leaves such as maternity and parental leave. Recent research shows that Quebec's parental and maternity leave does a better job at reaching low-income families than does the program available in the rest of Canada. There are several elements behind this — a lower entrance requirement, additional 'use-it-or-lose-it' weeks of leave for the non-birthing parent, and higher replacement rates for portions of the benefit period.

UFCW Canada members have many diverse social and economic concerns. The following additional recommendations are based on issues that are particularly relevant to them:

• UFCW Canada recommends that legislation be amended to compel employers to provide reliable scheduling practices and better notice periods. The majority of retail workers are women working part-time hours. Employers do not always give guarantees as to how many hours a part-time employee will receive. This results in insufficient notice of shifts, last-minute changes to schedules, cancelled shifts right before they begin, and abbreviated shifts once the employee has arrived. This gives employers a large pool of individuals willing to work any time at a moment's notice, as this is the only way to receive hours. Unreliable scheduling practices operate to the detriment of many workers, particularly part-time employees. These practices disproportionately affect women, and worsen the wage gap.

UFCW Canada Local 1006A and UFCW Canada Local 175 & 633 recently negotiated a pilot scheduling project with a large food retail employer aimed at addressing the notice issue. The "two (2) week rolling schedule," provides each employee at least 10 days' notice of what her/his schedule will be for the week. With the exception of emergencies, the employer cannot change the schedule once posted, without consent of the affected employees. Providing adequate notice is important for allowing employees to plan their lives in such a way as to maximize their work hours to their desired level.

• We also call on the federal government to champion, support and help fund a high quality, universal childcare system. UFCW Canada recently surveyed its youth and young adult members (more than 60 percent are women) on what they would like to see from the federal government when it comes to addressing young worker issues.¹ Access to high quality, universal childcare ranked as one of their top three responses.

Women are unable to access better paying jobs or full-time jobs because of a lack of affordable and accessible childcare. Working mothers in Quebec have been able to benefit tremendously from the implementation of high quality, universal childcare. This is widely accepted as a key component to reducing the gender wage gap.

We understand that negotiations toward a new framework for early learning and childcare are underway. We recommend that federal government, in co-operation with the provinces and territories, make adequate funding available to ensure all Canadian families can access quality, affordable childcare; and that this universal system be considered a priority to be achieved without undue delay.

On behalf of the membership of UFCW Canada, we urge the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women to consider all of the above to ensure that the economic security of women in Canada is improved. We look forward to working with you.

Respectfully submitted by:

The United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW Canada)

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¹ UFCW Canada (2017). *UFCW Canada – Submission to the Expert Panel on Youth Employment*. Retrieved from <http://www.ufcw.ca/templates/ufcwcanada/images/directions17/february/1713/UFCW-CANADA-Submission-to-the-Expert-Panel-on-Youth-Employment.pdf>