



**PAY EQUITY OFFICE**  
**BUREAU DE ÉQUITÉ SALARIALE**

Amid a global pandemic, the global economy saw unanticipated yet devastating regression in women's labour market participation and exacerbation of the gender wage gap. While Ontario has had the most advanced pay equity legislation globally for the past 30 years, the gender wage gap persists and threatens to widen at home as women's employment plummets with rising COVID cases and lockdowns.

Amid these setbacks, we saw another unexpected phenomenon – a surge in the number of reports, studies, and stories about women and the economy, and the economics of inequity. “Over the past year we have coined the terms, ‘she-cession’, ‘she-covery’ with governments and agencies globally talking about a “feminist post-COVID recovery”” says Kadie Ward, Commissioner and CAO of Ontario's Pay Equity Commission. “This is not surprising,” she adds “given that the economic impact to be derived from women's participation in the labour market with wage equity is large and measurable.”

An often-cited report by McKinsey estimated that, by 2026, Canada could add \$150 billion to its annual gross domestic product (GDP) by supporting women's participation in the workforce.<sup>[1]</sup> The Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) puts the number at \$100 billion.<sup>[2]</sup>

That's why the team at the Pay Equity Office has launched a 6-part web-series called Level the Paying Field exploring topics related to economics, equity, women, work and wage equity. “We wanted to know more about gender and pay equity's resurgence as an imperative to post-COVID economic recovery,” says Ward. Commissioner Ward hosts a series of compelling discussions about gender wage gaps at home and around the world, and how to close them with experts from the International Labour Organization, Harvard Business School, University of Toronto, and more.

Episode 1 will launch Sept. 15<sup>th</sup> online at [www.Levelthepayingfield.ca](http://www.Levelthepayingfield.ca) with additional episodes launching weekly on Wednesdays through October 20<sup>th</sup>.

### **Quick Facts**

- The gender wage gap is the difference between wages earned by men and wages earned by women. According to Statistics Canada, the pre-pandemic gender wage gap in Ontario was 12.2%. This means that for every \$1.00 earned by a male worker, a female worker earns 88 cents. This gap is even wider for Indigenous women in Canada who earn 65 cents on the dollar, racialized women who earn 67 cents, and newcomer women who earn 71 cents.

- It has been reported that 1.5 million women in Canada lost their jobs in the first two months of the pandemic and in April 2020, women's employment dropped to 55 percent, the lowest it has been since the 1980s.
- Ontario was the first government globally to pass a Pay Equity Act in 1988. The Ontario Pay Equity Office has offered information to help employers and employees understand their rights and responsibilities under the Act for over 30 years. It also investigates complaints alleging contravention of the Pay Equity Act and works to help parties resolve their disputes.

## **Additional Resources**

- Visit LevelThePayingField.ca
- More information on the Pay Equity Commission | Commission de l'égalité salariale (gov.on.ca)
- Learn more about International Equal Pay Day International Equal Pay Day

[1] McKinsey Global Institute. June 2017. [The Power of Parity: Advancing Women's Equality in Canada.](#)

[2] Royal Bank of Canada. July 2020. [Pandemic Threatens Decades of Women's Labour Force Gains.](#)

[3] McKinsey Global Institute. Juin 2017. [Le pouvoir de la parité : promouvoir l'égalité hommes-femmes au Canada.](#)

[4] Banque Royale du Canada. Juillet 2020. [La pandémie menace des décennies de progression des femmes au sein de la population active.](#) /