

Commissioner Ward: Welcome to Level the Playing Field where we explore topics related to economics, equity, women, work, and money. My name is Kadie Ward and I'm Commissioner and CAO of Ontario's Pay Equity Commission.

Alison Chan: And I'm Alison Chan, Program Specialist at Ontario's Pay Equity Office, where we aim to correct the gender pay gap through ongoing research and awareness raising.

Commissioner Ward: In this week's webisode, we are looking into busting some widespread myths about women and work. We hear a lot of myths about why the gender pay gap exists. Some of those being, you know, women provide less value, women don't negotiate, parental leave is primarily for women and much more. And frankly, these myths just aren't true. Alison, here's, you know, a famous, the mother lode of all myths, the mother of all myths I should say, that women don't provide as much value in the economy. What would you say to that?

Alison Chan: I would say that it isn't that women provide less value, it's that women's work is undervalued in an economy that is traditionally dominated by men. Women and men have historically been clustered in certain occupations and these occupations are valued and compensated differently by society and by employers. This clustering persists in Ontario today. As of May 2021, women dominate in areas such as health, education, law, community and government services, just to name a few. And the clustering of men and women in these different sectors is prompted by gender and social norms, and it has led to the devaluation of women's work. And even when women work outside of these women-dominated sectors, their contributions are still valued less than men. A 2016 report that was written by Deloitte found that a qualified working woman in Ontario, who has the same demographic characteristics and level of experience as a man in the same field, received \$7,200 less per year. And this is known as the gender wage gap. Deloitte estimates that it amounts to around \$18 billion worth of forgone income per year for all working women in Ontario. They also estimated that if wage parity was reached, it would increase household incomes, which could then lead to increased revenues from personal and sales tax by \$2.6 billion. And that government spending on social assistance, tax credits, and child benefits, could decrease by \$103 million. So, if the gender wage gap was eliminated. Everybody wins. If you ask why the gender wage gap exists, you'll likely get a variety of different answers, a lot of them are based on myths that we'll address in this discussion. Statistics Canada has identified some factors that contribute towards the wage gap including factors like human capital, which means, you know, level of education, years of work experience. It also includes things like whether or not you're working part time or full time if you work in the public or the private sector, if you're unionized if you're not. Other factors also include things like your occupation and what industry you work in, and your demographic characteristics such as your age, marital status so on and so forth. But these factors can only explain about 30% of the wage gap in Ontario and around 70% of it remains unexplained. The

unexplained portions of the gap could include factors such as differences in behavior, and the impact of explicit or implicit discrimination.

Commissioner Ward: You know, I think that's a great segue to introduce our first guest who will help us dispel a commonly accepted excuse or myth about why the gender wage gap exists. We're going to speak with Janelle Benjamin who is the founder of All Things Equitable and has been battling discrimination on two fronts throughout her career, gender and race. We learned about Janelle's story through the Globe and Mail's Power Gap Series where she heard, she shared, sorry, her experience in accepting a job offer in the not-for-profit sector, only to have the offer rescinded when she tried to negotiate a higher salary. She joined us to tackle the myth that women don't negotiate. Let's take a look.

Myth: "Women don't negotiate" with Janelle Benjamin

Commissioner Ward: So you know, with that in mind, and your experience as you talk about in your work from gender and racial perspective(s). And definitely with the risk you had of having your job offer rescinded, you know, what are those barriers and risks facing women, especially marginalized women, who want to negotiate and advocate for themselves in the workplaces?

Janelle Benjamin: Yeah, I mean we're literally risking, you know, our livelihoods right? When it's our ability to take care of ourselves when you're, especially racialized, we know the disparities that exist in our society already. When you compound that with our gender. It's just insurmountable right? So when you, you know, you're going into an organization and you're met with, you know, an offer, being completely revoked and off the table right. What does that do to generations of my family right? That's lost income. The ability to you know invest collect interest whatever it is on the income for, you know, for myself, for my for generations of my family, it's impacting the generational wealth that we know is a part a huge part of the conversation of the wealth gap. We're talking about you know the experiences of racialized people in society we're just nowhere near where we need to be in terms of the gains that we need to make it society. So it's an additional step back right? When you know you compound our race with our gender and then you know we're discriminated against for asking. And sometimes it's not even just about salary right? But some of the barriers that you can be faced with on top of just, you know, the insecurity of not getting the job offer sometimes it's, it comes down to, you know, you get in the door, and there's already perceptions or ideas, stereotypes about you based on racists tropes that you know, you're too greedy or you know you're undeserving and you know some of that kind of plays into why women decide not to ask and racialized women in particular right? We, you know, we're in typically lower level paying positions depending on which community that we're part of, you know, we're, we're the, the nannies and we're the housekeepers and we're the, you know, the clerks

and and what have you in whatever industry, in the hospital we're the, you know, the caregivers, etc. We're not, you know, in the C suite, making tons and tons of money and so when it is that we're negotiating even at in these, these jobs, these important jobs. You know, compensate us fairly, compensate use adequately. It's really important for our survival and our ability to to support our families.

Commissioner Ward: You made a really important point that I want to dive into a bit deeper about intersectionality and the different experiences for different women right? And there are different risks, realities, and experiences for different women and for the most part, you know, data doesn't capture the risks of negotiation or the challenges, taken by women of color, newcomer women, women with disabilities, LGBTQ women, and other marginalized communities. From your experience, what are some of the ways that all of us can better understand these risks so we can actually work to dismantle those systemic forms of discrimination that exists in the workforce?

Janelle Benjamin: I think we have to take a critical look at, you know, power and privilege and who has, you know power and privilege and access, and who doesn't in our society just at, you know, the foundations right? When you look at the disparities, economic disparities between communities, I think that's a critical starting point before making decisions around people's people's pay and, you know, their livelihood and their ability to, to support their families. Before you label or stereotype people, you know, understand where it is that they're coming from, why is it that they're asking for more on a particular issue and know ahead of time I think it's important for for organizational leaders to know ahead of time. What areas of this compensation, of this offer, are you willing to be flexible on? Like don't put forward an inflexible offer, and if you are, then say so, right? Had the offer been presented to me to say you know Janelle this is really a firm offer, it's non-negotiable, you know, we're not budging on anything that you know, we're not making any concessions here, then it's up to me to decide okay, am I okay with what's being presented on the table for us? I might have just taken it right? We were quibbling literally over like \$2500 or \$3,000. It wasn't anything exorbitant. So, you know, what is that over, you know, 12 months of the year? But for me, it was the principle of not starting at the base, right? So, for, I think it's really important for organizational leaders to know, okay, on what points can we, will we, concede or give or take, right? If somebody asks for additional vacation days or the ability to work from home or are you, are you able to be flexible and if you're not, say so upfront so that people can make informed decisions for for what they need to do for themselves and for their families because the generational wealth conversation is hugely important. When we talk about, you know, again, who has the power to set, who doesn't. And the fact that reparations have never been paid to black people in particular. It's an important conversation because, you know, how are we to, to overcome the, the kind of systematic disenfranchisement of our community if it is that we can't negotiate at least at the individual level for, you know, what should be fair and fairly compensated.

Commissioner Ward: What a deeply personal but also thoughtful debunking of the myth that the pay gap exists because women don't negotiate.

Alison Chan: Absolutely. And aside from Janelle's personal experience, there is ongoing research on this topic, including a study with a data set of 4600 workers across 840 workplaces in Australia, and we'll link the, the study for our viewers. This study suggests that there is no statistically significant difference between men and women in the probability of having asked for a promotion or a raise. And it seems that men and women, ask equally often, but women are turned down much more frequently.

Commissioner Ward: Well Alison I think we can consider that myth busted.

Next, we spoke with Ian Howcroft of Skills Ontario about another common myth, about why the gender wage gap exists - because women choose lower paying jobs. Ian works with Skills Ontario, a province-wide organization focused on building Ontario's skilled trades and technologies workforce. More specifically, they work to provide opportunities for youth to explore and develop skills for successful careers in the skilled trades and technologies.

Myth: “Women choose lower paying jobs” with Ian Howcroft

Commissioner Ward: Labour market research shows that women were least represented in trades, transport, and equipment operators and related occupations, only about 7% of those, that workforce is made up of women. So this is a fact I'm sure your team well knows, and just seeking to understand. What are some of the existing barriers and challenges that women face when trying to enter the trades sector?

Ian Howcroft: I think there's several. One being the fact that there's very few women in those trades, in those jobs that can act as role models or perhaps mentors. I think there's some perceptions that are inaccurate at worst, at best, they're just outdated. I think what we need to do is make sure that girls and young women and everybody has an accurate perception of what the realities are for these trades and these career opportunities, how do we dispel some of those myths, we deal with that all the time, trying to make sure people are understanding what these realities are and what those opportunities are to to move forward with. I think another audience that we have to get to (are) parents, many parents don't encourage their kids to look to a career in the skilled trades or technologies. And I think that's intensified when it comes to a girl or young women. (They) even have more of a burden to get over to find out about those those opportunities. So we're trying to build awareness, we're trying to deal with the perceptions and put forward opportunities to give them the opportunity to try a trade, to see what they're all about, don't ask questions and to see role models that they can emulate from and ask questions of and find out how others have successfully entered the trade or the technology career and what barriers they met and how they got over those barriers.

Commissioner Ward: So as you know, the Pay Equity Commission works to close the gender wage gap. And you know, on balance, regulated trades or regulated professions, provide more transparent and equal compensation structures, and we often hear that the wage, the gender wage gap exists because women choose low paying jobs like clerical work or caregiving or retail. But that's not true. How would you, how would you bust that myth?

Ian Howcroft: Well, I think that the girls and young women in fact everybody, you know, choose careers that they're aware of and perhaps what they think is expected of them I think what we have to do is broaden the horizons and give them more information about what the whole range of opportunities are and provide them with a more clear opportunity, more clear pathway and more assistance and tools so that they can explore what's the best career for them. We're not saying that there's good careers or bad careers there's a whole lot range of opportunities out there. What we want to do is make sure that we're providing everybody with the information they need to try, to explore, and to find out where their passion is, where their interests lie, and what they can do to choose a career path is going to allow them to have, what their personal goals are, and what their career goals are, and I think there's a lot more that still needs to be done in that. We've had great success. We're getting out in our in-school presentations, did over 2000 of them last year. We getting out to between 80 and 90,000 individuals but there's still a lot more out there that we have to get to. And I think the pandemic is shown that there's a lot more important jobs out there that people took for granted, or wouldn't even consider. We look at what we need to do to keep the economy going, to provide the personal protective equipment, to make sure that we have food in people's homes, and they can access the logistical support, the trucks and all these things have to be maintained and have to be built. And I think there's probably a little bit more favorable impression on some of the skilled trade careers, than there was 18 months ago so we need to continue to our work to get that message out there and let the girls and young women, and everybody know what these opportunities are and these are excellent career opportunities that give you balance in life that give you, excellent remuneration, and you can start your own business, you can grow, you can do other things. I know some people that started one skilled trade and add to it, you know, a woman who's who's a, a, an iron worker but she's also know practicing to become a boiler maker as well. So it's the, the opportunities are limitless. What we have to do is make sure people are aware of that. And what can we do to help them understand what these opportunities are and get access to the information that they need.

Commissioner Ward: Ian's answer covered a relevant and important point - women choose careers that they are aware of and/or based on what is expected of them from society.

Alison Chan: That's right. And as I said in the intro, women in Ontario are clustered in certain occupations and these occupations are valued differently by society and by

employers. So seeing how Skills Ontario helps to demonstrate that young women and girls can be successful in traditionally male dominated sectors is very encouraging.

Commissioner Ward: Absolutely and you know the more they see women in a broad spectrum of sectors, the more they will see themselves and broader career opportunities so I think we can say that the myth that, you know, women choose lower paying careers is busted so thanks Ian and Skills Ontario for that.

Next we're going to speak with two experts about an often cited excuse or myth of the gender wage gap, which goes something like this: women take maternity leave, and so it's on their shoulders for creating a pay gap while they're away.

Alison Chan: That's right. And while it is true that maternity leave does create and widen the gender wage gap, there is an underlying myth that perpetuates that, which is that it's women's responsibility to take parental leave, and that when they return to the workplace, they are less committed employees.

Commissioner Ward: We spoke with Alyson Colon and Ed Gough Jr. about this. Alyson is the Associate Director of the Institute for Gender and the Economy at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management. Alyson and her team are committed to advancing the conversation on gender dynamics in the workplace and larger society through rigorous research and practical and impactful approaches. Alyson and I spoke about the motherhood penalty which is a pay gap arising when women take parental leave and ways we can eliminate it.

Myth: “Parental leave is for women” with Alyson Colón

Commissioner Ward: So, you know, doing this research and understanding the causes and why it exists can maybe help us understand, you know, my next question which is, you know, what can we do to eliminate it?

Alyson Colón: Yeah. So one of the persistent issues of the core of the motherhood penalty is inequality around care work, and in so much as we are able to encourage men and women to more equitably share care responsibilities at home, and to take parental leaves at equal rates, we may start to see a shift in the motherhood penalty. So for organizations, this may mean creating environments where men are encouraged to take parental leave, take advantage of flex time policies and utilize alternative working arrangements in order to meet care needs at home. So we know from the research that many organizations, they may have paternity leave and flex time policies in place, but men still may receive signals in the workplace that taking advantage of these options will hurt their career. So in addition, the way fathers think about masculinity can influence their parental involvement and the likelihood of them taking parental leave. Traditional beliefs about masculinity often involve being the family breadwinner and as a result men may feel as if they're obligated to preserve their masculine identity and

forego the option to take a leave. So we really need to re-envision our ideas about working fathers and offer men more choices, and this in turn will offer up more choices and opportunities for women too. And then, another big move that we can make is to support more accessible childcare, as long as family responsibilities remain un-equally shared as they do now, the gender gap is not likely to close so providing affordable and accessible on-site childcare or subsidizing access to other childcare sources are ways that employers can help parents who wish to work full time. And then finally, to combat bias in the workplace, we need to change our structures. So for example, a manager may assume that a woman who has just returned from parental leave may not be interested in a challenging work assignment or maybe a promotion that requires travel, but we shouldn't assume that this is the case, so make it an organizational practice to consider everyone for career opportunities and let your parents decide for themselves how they want to coordinate their work and care responsibilities

Commissioner Ward: That is a very comprehensive answer and I appreciate that you're bringing in a lot of the other structural issues and I like the specific answer, the part of the answer where you talked about, you know, the definition of masculinity being breadwinner and femininity being caregiver and so this is sort of like a foundational piece that, that needs to shift so thank you for the research and for sharing. You know what you're learning about this, what does the research say about the employers' perspective? And, you know, with the motherhood penalty, it seems as though companies see women who are mothers or prospective mothers as a liability rather than an asset.

Alyson Colón: Yeah, I would encourage companies that are feeling the impacts of parental leave to reframe the situation. So when a parent returns from parental leave or requests a flex time arrangement, it's an indication to you that they are more committed to their career and the organization, not less. So they're looking to balance the many responsibilities that they have between home and work so that they continue to, can continue to work with you and that's a committed individual who wants to be there. And another way to reframe parental leaves and flex time arrangements are to view them as opportunities. So parental leaves can provide organizations with great opportunities to cross train employees from different areas of the organization, provide chances for more junior staff to gain experience, and they can be occasions to bring new talent into a company. So I think reframing parental leave, what it means to your organization, can help you to uncover new opportunities to innovate and new ways to leverage talent in your company.

Commissioner Ward: To continue our discussion around the inequality in parental leave, we spoke with Ed Gough Jr. to address the myth that parental leave is for women. Ed is a fatherhood advocate and member of Dad Central's Steering Committee. His main mission is to peel back the layers of mainstream constructs around fathers and men, and to reveal the positivity that is often clouded behind social norms. And one of those constructs is around parental leave.

Myth: “Parental leave is for women” (continued) with Ed Gough Jr.

Commissioner Ward: There is convincing scientific evidence, and I'm sure you're well versed in this, that men taking parental leave has widespread spread benefits to everyone in the household the children their partners and actually to themselves. What are some of those benefits that you, you see and you share and you talk about with the, with the fathers you work with?

Ed Gough Jr.: Well there's a number of... I'll cover about three or four here. We could go on forever but one of the things it's strengthened partnerships. Because, and we can use what we've been through over the last 14 months, a lot of fathers were now at home. So now they were engaged into, like, not to say they weren't engaged day to day but they were more engaged in the child or children's lives. So now that, that role became more significant because the father was there more. He was not only present but he had presence more day to day. And when you have that in the context, we're chatting about today in regards to mother and father, two is better than one. And if the two are working together, not only does that help the relationship between the father and the mother, that there, but it also improves the relation between the children and the father, so everybody wins. Everybody wins in that situation. So, say, a young father for the last number of months or if he has parental leave, he can take care of the baby. Yeah, you know he lightens the mother's load, and also our young people, they watch what's going on. So when that father's home, it gives a really big impact on what a family should look like to that child. Even though that child may be really young, they're learning, they're listening. They're getting at a very early age, what a family should look like what a family should sound like, what does mommy do, what does daddy do, all those things. Also, another thing that brings to his increase happiness and fulfillment. You have the family home, there's there's care, there's stories to be... shared, there's events to be shared. So it helps everybody in the family because it's more a communal family in regards to, there's people taking roles and responsibilities very seriously. And one of the biggest benefits is that fathers spend more time to bond with their children. So many studies show that paternity leave, especially longer leave can help dads become more nurturing fathers and much more supportive partner. So those are just some of the things that I'd like to share today...Oh actually one other thing too, sorry forgot. It also, it also supports gender equality.

Commissioner Ward: It's wonderful that you're doing this work to promote that message. You know at the Pay Equity Office, we often hear what we know actually, there's a lot of scientific research and data that shows that the wage gap for women widens after, after children because they take so much time in the caregiving role right? They're more likely to take, step out of full time employment, and as you pointed out earlier, it might be because they're not necessarily that the breadwinner... might have been a financial decision but then that has a long term effect by sort of widening the pay gap for women. And so the the the myth or the counter argument to that, that's associated with that, is like well parental leave is for women. How would you bust that

myth, what would you say to just like get that myth out of the water that parental leave is for women?

Ed Gough Jr.: Parental leave is for the family. It's not for the women. It's for the family. And a lot of times, having that responsibility of not having to take care of the child. And a lot of cases, increases the woman's productivity in the workplace, which a lot of times, leads to increased mobility upward, if they're wanting in the workplace and also more financial gain from the workplace, so it's not for the woman, it is for the family. Family, family, have to focus on what is best for the family. The work we do at Dad Central, we want to help fathers so they can be better for the family, for the kids, and the family, so we have to make sure we're looking at family first. And if we get the family structure right, other things, this is my opinion, in society will only get better.

Alison Chan: I mean, what a powerful statement and an effective way to bust the myth that parental leave is primarily for women. We want to thank each of our guests for sharing their expertise and experiences with us to help us dispel common myths or misconceptions that are used to explain the gender wage gap.

Commissioner Ward: Absolutely. We hope, you know, viewers and listeners that they enjoyed this conversation about common excuses and myths for the gender wage gap and that they can actually use information to bust myths as they confront them.

This conversation is part of a series published by the Pay Equity Commission of Ontario to examine economics, equity, women, work and money. You can learn more at levelthepayingfield.ca. Please share this video on you social platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn - so we can elevate the equity conversation.