****

**Ep1: What is the Gender Wage Gap?**

**Kadie Ward (KW)**: Welcome to Level the Paying Field, season two, a six-part series that seeks to uncover the invisible drivers of the gender wage gap. My name is Kadie Ward, and I'm Commissioner and CAO of Ontario's Pay Equity Commission. Join me and my outstanding guests in exploring how women in the labour market still experience multiple biases and what can be done to confront and remedy them. Let's learn together what we can do to level the paying field.

Paulette, the Canadian Women's Foundation has been actively advocating for gender equality across a broad spectrum of issues, so to speak. Can you share with us why it's so imperative right now to continue with that work?

**Paulette Senior (PS):** Well, you know, we've had a longstanding issue of the gender wage gap in Canada for so long, it's really hard to kind of think about how long it's happened, and it's really due to a number of factors that we are seeing. So, gender equality happens across the board, and the gender wage gap is one of those sort of external indicators of one of the issues that we need to contend with. And it's been one of the longest standing issues of inequality. And so, why I do this work and why many of us do this work is because we have to continuously chip away at the factors that contribute to it. Those kinds of traditional stereotypes that keep women in these sort of traditional roles that prevent them from being able to advance, whether in their careers or whether in terms of the pay they get for doing the same work or whether in terms of the leadership roles that they're holding.

So, I'm really excited about the fact that in fact, we are making progress. But we also know that the progress that we're making is differentiated based on women's intersecting identities. And so this conversation to me is an important one to have because the data that we've been generating in recent years are really showing where the gaps lie and where they are the widest. But it also points to some of the policy changes that we can make because we know policies don't always work for everyone. And so we need to have the kinds of policy changes that recognize those kinds of intersections where women's realities lie and be able to make the adjustments that's needed to really see all women progress and to close that gender pay gap.

**KW:** Thank you. I want to touch base - go back to a conversation we had earlier on: the 70% of the gender wage gap that remains unexplained. We spend a lot of time talking about this because 30% we can explain why, but there's 70% that remains unexplained. From your perspective and the things that you've seen with the Canadian Women's Foundation and throughout your career, you know, how do we address those unexplained elements?

**PS:** Well, you know, to me, when we see something that's unexplained, it means that we have to spend some time understanding why they're unexplained. So, there are a number of factors that get to that. One of them is looking at or related to what we call caregiving roles and choices. We know that, for example, when women have children that there's a price that they pay when it comes to their salaries while men actually benefit from becoming fathers.

Like, how is that acceptable? So, there's some work that we need to do there in terms of understanding why that factor exists, and there are also other factors. So, workplace social norms and values that we hold, we know that we place value on workers who have the ability to sort of work in traditional ways, to commute, to sort of be unencumbered by responsibilities that they have. So, it's an opportunity for us to really examine those long held sort of social norms and see how we can actually bust them open because some of them are mythical and not necessarily related to one's ability to do the same work.

**KW:** I love the way that you phrased it at the beginning: unexplained probably means unexamined. So that's what we are here to do is really examine those hidden biases that drive the gender wage gap. Thank you so much.

**PS:** Thank you.

**KW:** This conversation is part of a series produced by the Pay Equity Commission of Ontario to examine economics, equity Women work and Money. Episodes can be found on www.levelthepayingfield.ca on the YouTube channel of Ontario Pay Equity Office, and wherever you download your podcasts. Please share this episode on your social platforms so we can elevate the equity conversation.