



MEDIA RELEASE

Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario orders government to end gender pay gap for midwives

TORONTO, February 24, 2020: In a landmark legal decision, the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario has ordered the Ford government to take concrete actions to end the gender pay gap midwives experience as a result of the Ministry of Health's discriminatory actions.

"Government needs to immediately implement the orders aimed at closing the gender pay gap now and into the future. The orders call for substantial monetary *Human Rights Code* adjustments and changes to ministry compensation setting practices. Once implemented, the orders will work to ensure midwives no longer take home substantially less compensation because our work is so deeply associated with women. The orders will ensure midwives no longer suffer from prejudice and stereotypes about the value of our work," explains Elizabeth Brandeis, Toronto midwife and president of the Association of Ontario Midwives (AOM).

"The tribunal has ordered government to set the compensation of midwives using a gender analysis — including its overlapping scope of practice with medicine and the fact that midwives, family physicians and obstetricians are considered equally competent by government as providers of low-risk care for pregnancy and birth." Elizabeth Brandeis.

"The tribunal has spoken, the way forward is clear. The time has come for government to stop spending tax dollars and resources by continuing to wage its seven-year legal battle against midwives. We are calling on government to withdraw its judicial review of the tribunal decisions and comply with the tribunal orders." Elizabeth Brandeis.

"I'm one of 963 midwives in Ontario. As midwives, we know what systemic gender discrimination is and what it looks like. We live with discrimination and its impact in our own lives and we witness discrimination and its impact on the lives of the people who come to us for care each and every day. The tribunal confirmed this experience. It confirmed we experience discrimination in the compensation we are paid by government because our work and the health care we provide is so deeply and historically associated with women," states Liz Fraser, Ottawa midwife.

The human rights legal system in Ontario has upheld the rights of midwives by ordering government to close the gender pay gap.

"This is a precedent setting decision that will have positive ripple effects for human rights in Ontario and across the country, especially for equity seeking groups impacted by systemic forms of discrimination and those in jobs historically associated with women. The tribunal's decision means that those who set the compensation of sex-segregated workers and other protected groups must

proactively ensure their compensation practices are free of bias,” says Mary Cornish, human rights lawyer and AOM counsel.

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A copy of the Human Rights Tribunal decision and orders can be viewed at www.ontariomidwives.ca.

Media Contact:

Juana Berinstein

Director, Policy & Communications

Association of Ontario Midwives

Phone: 416-425-9974 x 229

Mobile: 416-371-1468

juana.berinstein@aom.on.ca