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**PLEASE POST – BL10259**

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## **March 8: International Women's Day**

### **Unions are leading the fight for women's equality**

When our mothers entered the workforce a generation ago, job postings still listed higher wages for men – “men's rates” – alongside lower “women's rates,” for people working side by side, doing exactly the same job.

While women have fought for and achieved many significant gains, the wage gap between women and men today remains staggering: almost 30 per cent. Women working full-time still only make 70 cents for every dollar men are paid.

On average, a Canadian woman earns \$39,200, while a man earns \$55,700. The gap is even more appalling for women of colour (68 cents / dollar) and worst for Aboriginal women (46 cents / dollar).

Surprisingly, the situation is worse for women with post-secondary education. The Canadian Labour Congress reports that in 1985, these women earned 75 per cent of what their male peers got paid. By 2005, this had dropped to 68 per cent.

#### **Union women lead the way**

In fact, having union representation was the best way for women to achieve fairness. For example, in 2006, unionized women earned an average of \$21.85 an hour, or 93 per cent of the wage of unionized men, according to the CLC.

That's in addition to the other benefits of being part of a union: better benefits, job security, protection from harassment, and maternity and parental leave benefits. However much we have achieved, it's clear that more remains to be done.

HSA invites members to celebrate International Women's Day by taking part in various activities and celebrations taking place across the province this weekend. Check HSA's website at [hsabc.org](http://hsabc.org) for a full listing of events.