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Media Release
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*Tabled by the Member for
St. John's Centre with
leave. K. Haulby-George
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Pay Equity Legislation Woefully Inadequate

St. John's, NL – The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour (NLFL) is disappointed in Pay Equity and Pay Transparency legislation announced yesterday that is behind the times and will not do the heavy lifting required to close the gender pay gap. The legislation was developed without prior consultation with unions or the NLFL, who have been advocating for proactive pay equity legislation for years.

“Pay equity legislation is supposed to address the systemic undervaluing of jobs that are traditionally performed by women and gender diverse people,” said Mary Shortall, President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour. “We know that systemic wage discrimination exists in both the public *and* private sectors, so it is unfortunate that the pay equity section of this legislation does not apply to the private sector at all, which means that thousands of workers in jobs dominated by women and gender diverse people will continue to be underpaid.”

The NLFL will be reviewing the legislation in further detail in the coming days and consulting with allies on next steps. Based on an initial review, the province's pay equity provisions are very thin and do not meet the bar set by Ontario, Quebec and the federal government; nor does it follow the Guidelines for Equal Pay established by the International Labour Organization in 2013. The guide states that consultation with social partners, such as workers' organizations and employers, is crucial to achieving equal pay.

“While it is important to follow through on its 2017 promise to address the wide gender pay gap through pay equity legislation, it is hard to understand why, in those 5 years, Government never reached out to the labour movement and other groups who represent workers, women and gender diverse people, and who have been doing this work for decades.” continued Shortall. “Consultation after the legislation is tabled feels like a slap in the face to pay equity advocates who have been doing this work for years.”

A crucial component of any proactive Pay Equity legislation is a requirement to establish pay equity committees, and work with bargaining agents to examine compensation structures, and develop pay equity plans. While the provincial government took some language from New Brunswick's pay equity legislation, this section was left out.

“The COVID-19 pandemic and economic downturn demonstrated that women and gender diverse workers are the core of the economy, and suffered the greatest over the past few years. Women and gender diverse people in the private sector should not be left behind in these important legislative initiatives,” Shortall concludes. “With this inadequate



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legislation, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador lost the opportunity to meaningfully address the gender wage gap, and the undervaluing of work done by women and gender diverse people in the province.”

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