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The Black Box of Pay Equity in Canadian Sport Coaching
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Pay equity is a vital concern to employed women in every sector of Canada's economy, and coaching is not exempt. That is why Claire Carver-Dias' article is timely, relevant, and enlightening. Certainly, those words capture the strong reactions of the *Journal's* Editorial Board to her article:

“ ... an exceptionally well-written article on a subject of significant importance about which obviously insufficient data exists ... the reported studies and research supported the premise that the time for action is now.”

“ ... her research is cogent and thorough; her voice is clear and compelling.”

“The statistical info is invaluable for continuing to advocate in a meaningful way for the profession of coaching and, most importantly, women in coaching.”

We hope that *Journal* readers gain as much from the article as did our Editorial Board. We hope, too, that the issue of pay (in)equity can be addressed quickly and positively, and we look to a new Sport Canada study on working conditions in the national sport system, expected in 2020, as one step in the process. Make sure your voices contribute to the discussion. – Sheila Robertson, *Journal* editor

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The Black Box of Pay Equity in Canadian Sport Coaching

By Claire Carver-Dias

While the topic of pay equity in the workplace has been discussed for decades, it was recent developments in the world of sport that once again pushed it firmly into the spotlight. Shortly

after winning their fourth World Championship, the US Women's National Soccer Team began an epic fight off the field of play - their battle for pay equity. Despite their popularity and long-term success, including as primary revenue generators for US Soccer, the female players were compensated with a fraction of the income paid to their male counterparts.

The soccer team's protest echoed the complaints of other professional woman athletes and, frankly, female workers across a myriad of other workplaces.

While these high-profile athlete challenges garner the attention of the public, their focus is on the field of play, and rarely extends to the sport professionals behind the bench: coaches. With the exception of professional sport and NCAA coaching staff, there is little data available about pay. Specifically, as I discovered through research for this article, we just don't know enough about salaries, benefits, and potential disparities in Canadian high performance sport coaching. Despite having searched for relevant Canadian statistics on sport coaching pay, I found myself empty-handed – we seem to know very little.

So let's begin with what we do know about pay equity and sport.

Pay Equity Defined

Essentially pay equity is “equal pay for work of equal or comparable value”

([https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/eco-](https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/eco-bce/Promo/payequitybureau/quick_guide_pay_equity-e.pdf)

[bce/Promo/payequitybureau/quick_guide_pay_equity-e.pdf](https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/eco-bce/Promo/payequitybureau/quick_guide_pay_equity-e.pdf)). And the statistics around pay equity are grim. According to a new study by well-known job search firm, Glassdoor, women in Canada earn only 84 cents for every dollar earned by men. Looking at this pay gap, Canada emerges in the middle of the pack, which also studied the United States of America, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Australia, Netherlands, and Singapore.

In 1987, the Ontario government passed the *Pay Equity Act*. The Act describes the minimum requirements that must be met by an employer in terms of compensation practices, specifically that they must provide pay equity for all employees. The Act requires employers to identify and correct the gender discrimination that may be present in their pay practices and to adjust the wages of employees in female job classes so that they are at least equal to the wages of employees in male job classes found to be comparable in value based on skill, effort, responsibility, and working conditions. According to the Act, all employees, male and female, in undervalued female job classes would receive pay equity wage adjustments.

For the purposes of this article, I sought out statistical information on the state of pay equity in Canada, as mentioned above. I found much more was available in terms of data from an American perspective. Although there are differences between our two nations, I felt it was nonetheless helpful to present the American data and perspective on the matter.

According to American reports, as dire as pay equity statistics are for women globally, they are worse for women of visible minorities. Facebook's chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg contends that: “If you break the pay gap down by race and ethnicity, it's even worse: black women were paid 63 cents; Latinas, 54 cents for every dollar white men made.” This is notable considering black women are among the most educated in the American workforce. Women

are overrepresented in low-wage jobs and underrepresented in high-wage jobs. Moreover, it remains that a greater burden of household duties is placed on women. Finally, there are the long-lasting effects of withdrawing from the workforce, even temporarily, for maternity leave or to raise a family. Collectively, these factors render women less likely to advance to senior positions with higher salaries.

The pay gap holds women back, rendering it difficult for them to support themselves and their families. Likewise, it's bad for business growth, as it establishes a systematic barrier for the creation of a diverse and innovative workforce.

(Some) Progress has been made

Similar to the Glassdoor findings, Statistics Canada claims that in 2018, female employees aged 25 to 54 earned on average \$4.13 (or 13.3%) less per hour than their male colleagues. In other words, they earned \$0.87 for every dollar earned by men. In hourly wages, the gender gap narrowed by 5.5 percentage points in the past 20 years to 18.8%. The research indicates that the wage gap reduction over that time is primarily explained by changes in the distribution of genders across occupations; an increase in women's educational attainment; and the decline in the number of men in unionized employment.

In common with other studies on the topic, the Statistics Canada research indicates that nearly two-thirds of the gap last year remains unexplained, but may be related to work experience, and unobservable factors, such as any gender-related biases. It's clear, as was stated in the research itself, that gender-based wage inequality warrants continued investigation.

Government legislation and pay disclosure

Earlier this year in the United States, a federal judge ruled that the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission should begin to require companies with more than 100 employees to collect and report their pay scales, broken down by gender and race. To comply with this rule, companies must collect and organize their pay data in a uniform way, and report the differences that surface based on gender and race. It is legislative moves like this that will help cast a spotlight on pay inequities. Canada needs to follow suit. Recently, massive pay inequity within the Canadian banking sector was uncovered only due to British legislation that requires public, private, and voluntary sector firms with over 250 employees to disclose average pay for males and females. The disclosures revealed that Scotiabank, Canada's third-largest lender, pays women "44 per cent less than men (on average) in its UK operation, a gap that widens to 72 per cent when it comes to discretionary bonuses (<https://www.macleans.ca/opinion/why-do-we-rely-on-uk-to-disclose-canadas-pay-inequity/>). The inequity is just as dire within other UK operations of other Canadian banks. It's impossible to know whether such discrepancies exist at the banks' Canadian operations because no such disclosure legislation exists.

There are some success stories from around the world highlighting the positive impact of pay transparency on addressing inequity. For example, a British pay study found that making pay practices transparent resulted in raised wages for all workers. It is also widely reported that in unionized workplaces and the public sector, where pay scales are published and known, the wage gap is far smaller.

Some countries have placed great emphasis and importance on public disclosure of pay equity gaps. There is the example of Britain, as cited above. Moreover, in Iceland companies undergo an annual audit to prove that they pay men and women equally, and must adjust any pay gap larger than five per cent. Germany, Australia and France have also begun to push these same types of rules, with France implementing a penalty of up to 1% total pay roll on employers who do not publish information on their gender wage gap or the financial measures they are taking to address it.

Canada has attempted to address some of the social factors that may contribute to pay inequity through such measures as the implementation of social-policy support in the form of job-protected maternity and parental leave, expanded partial income replacement for that leave, and legislation addressing unfair treatment in the labour market. But the gap remains stark.

Much work still to be done

There is also the lingering concern that many men don't think the gender gap is an issue. To cite an American example, a 2019 *Time* magazine article highlighted an online poll of 8,566 American adults that asked about pay gap issues. Nearly half of the men interviewed (46%) believed that the pay gap was a fictional narrative cultivated for political purposes. They did not see it as a legitimate issue. Twenty-four per cent of the interviewees opined that media reports of men and women being paid unequally constitutes fake news.

Extrapolating that these views are consistent within a Canadian context, we have a lot of work to do to educate the population about the reality of pay inequity and its negative impact.

The fight for pay equity in sport

As previously mentioned, there has been a rise in awareness about pay disparity within sport. The issue of inequitable pay and prize money practices within the realm of professional and high performance sport is now well known, partially helped by high profile protests such as the one by the US Women's Soccer Team, as previously mentioned, as well as Venus Williams' open letter to the *Times of London* in 2006. After winning Wimbledon, she criticized the tennis establishment because she received lower prize money than her male champion counterpart.

Similar to the US Women's Soccer Team, the US Women's Hockey Team brought attention to pay inequity and unfairness by threatening to withdraw from the 2017 IIHF World Women's Championships. They went on to sign a four-year labour agreement with USA Hockey that has seen their pay increase, and led to benefits, increased games, childcare, and maternity leave. Likewise, earlier this year, the Swedish Women's Hockey refused to attend their training camp and play in an international tournament in Finland, as they fought to receive higher compensation and better working conditions. On social media, player Erika Grahm wrote that the action is being taken to show "encouragement and respect" for current players and future generations.

These high profile battles are as much about respect as the pay itself. As Tanya (Toni) De Mello, a human rights lawyer and Director of Human Rights at Ryerson University, indicated: "We

need to start to think about pay equity as not about everyone being treated equally. Equity is about respect and giving people what they need so that there are equal outcomes.”

On Canadian ice, the 2019 Scotties Tournament of Hearts final between Chelsea Carey’s Team Alberta and Rachel Homan’s Ontario rink was watched by an average 762,000 viewers, while the Tim Horton’s Brier final saw 659,000 viewers. The women’s champions earned a prize of \$32,000, compared to the men’s champions, who were paid \$70,000 (<https://q107.com/news/5103939/wage-gap-continues-to-affect-sports-world-female-sports-expert/>).

Which brings us to sport coaching

There appears to be more known about pay equity in sport in the American context than in Canada. Title IX, first passed in 1972 by Congress, and amended in 1996, helped to advance the cause of pay equity in sport. Title IX legislation was intended to bolster the cause of equitable pay for the coaches of men’s and women’s athletics teams at NCAA colleges and universities. Unfortunately, the data available indicates that men’s coaches are paid much more than women’s coaches. Because of Title IX, universities attempt to demonstrate that the pay for women coaches has improved over men’s pay levels, and that these salaries are equitable based on history and on the fiscal reality of men’s and women’s sports.

“The US Department of Education data shows that pay for coaches of all Division I men’s sports increased to \$267,007 from 2003 to 2010. In that same period of time, pay for all women’s team coaches increased to \$98,106. Men’s team coaches enjoyed a 67 percent increase in their pay, while the increase for women’s team coaches (male or female) was only 16 percent” (<http://thesportdigest.com/2012/04/the-pay-gap-grows-between-men-and-women-coaches/>). It appears that more change and careful attention to this phenomenon is needed, even following the implementation of legislation.

“Since Title IX came into effect, there are more women’s teams being coached by men,” says Maria Dennis, Director, Player Health and Safety, and Associate Counsel, for the National Hockey League Players’ Association. In fact, *The Sport Digest* reports that over 60 percent of women’s Division I basketball teams have a male coach. At all levels of college basketball, the percentage of teams coached by men has increased from 20.6 percent in 1978 to 43 percent in 2010.

It seems evident that legislation alone cannot solve the issues of inequity; close monitoring of its implementation and impacts are also necessary.

Sport coaching and pay equity in Canada: Where do we go from here?

In my research for this article, I contacted nine influential leaders from all areas of the Canadian sport system. While all expressed an interest in the topic of pay equity in coaching, none were able to furnish any data around its current state of pay equity. Although anecdotal, this indicated that there may be a research gap or transparency issue related to pay equity in Canadian sport coaching.

Fortunately, some research may be on the way. In response to a request for available pay data, Pierre Thibault, Senior Program Analyst at Sport Canada, wrote: “Sport Canada does provide support to National Team coach positions in targeted sports, but we do not have at this time gender-based data on the total. A new study on working conditions in the national sport system, including gender-based data for coaches, is in development by major sport stakeholders with the goal to complete the study in 2020.” It seems we have something to look forward to come 2020 in terms of the publication of this data, which I hope includes detailed information on salary levels across the disciplines and an analysis of any discrepancies that exist.

In the meantime, we can focus on two additional areas.

Publication of salaries: While it is illegal for an employer to pay women less than men for the same work in this country, the phenomenon remains widespread. Women are fighting unequal pay in many sectors and likely want to change that reality. But before they can do something about it, they must be aware of what the men around them earn and whether they’re unfairly receiving less. This is why a push for radical transparency in coaching pay can only help. Through mandated publication of salary bands, these measures have helped narrow the gap in unionized and public sectors.

But there’s no need to wait for a government mandate. Forward-thinking sport organizations should not complacently wait for a government mandate; they can act immediately by conducting and releasing median pay gap analyses.

Female participation at the board level: We need to continue to advocate for more women in decision-making positions. A Women on Boards report reiterated a well-known and widespread problem across sport disciplines nationally and internationally: women hold fewer than 30 percent of board positions in many governing bodies. Women make up just 18 percent of all board members across the 28 International Sports Federations assessed. Among the 129 National Olympic Committees, the figure is even lower, and has actually decreased. Women consist of less than 17 percent of the boards, down since 2014. With more women in decision-making roles, the likelihood of diversified thought and attention to issues of equity will increase.

Since we know that diversity is a strength and leads to improved results, we need to continue to push for it. The fact is, it is in sport’s self-interest to build top-performing, equitable, diverse organizations – and that means, in this case, more women coaches, and the assurance that they will be paid equitably.

What are we waiting for?

About the Author

Claire Carver-Dias is the lead communications consultant and founder of Clearday Communications. She specializes in helping business leaders become more effective leaders and communicators. She had a 15-year high performance sport career that earned her an Olympic bronze medal, two Commonwealth Games gold medals, two Pan American Games gold medals, and over 30 international medals. Claire is a past president of AthletesCAN; has served on the board of directors for the Coaching Association of Canada and the Canada Games Council Sport Committee’ and is a director on the board of Commonwealth Games Canada. She led Team

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References Available Upon Request