

What is the employment equity situation like currently?

It is the dawn of the 21st century and women still earn about 61% of what men earn in the West Kootenays. Also, occupational segregation is still the norm. There are high percentages of women in nursing, sales, services and secretarial positions compared with about 2 – 4 % in trades, transportation and manufacturing employment. This situation is virtually never raised in economic or employment consultations or workshops. It is simply accepted as part of the current situation.

Even at the national level, equity is a big issue. Women earn an average of 73% of what men earn. Canada is rated as one of the top countries for human development according to the United Nations Development Program's index but drops about 10 or more places when gender is considered. If being at the top of the list is a source of national pride, shouldn't the drop be considered a national disgrace?

What are the impacts of workforce inequity?

Without equality in the workforce, women and other equity groups face systemic disadvantages that may take the form of lower paying jobs, difficulty accessing certain occupations, higher unemployment, lower decision-making authority, less training and so on. The fact that inequality has existed for so long and is seen as part of reality sends a negative message to girls and young women in terms of their own career expectations. What does equality of opportunity mean if there isn't equal ability for women to realize those opportunities?