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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Pay transparency legislation too weak to close gender wage gap

**Vancouver B.C.** – In reaction to the tabling of pay transparency legislation in the B.C. legislature earlier today, B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner states that while there are some positive elements to the bill, it lacks the approach necessary to make a significant difference on pay equity in the province.

B.C. has one of the highest gender pay gaps in Canada, at 17% in 2022.<sup>1</sup> Women and gender-diverse people in B.C. earn less than cisgender men for comparable work, and the gap worsens for those with disabilities, and for those who are Indigenous or racialized. Despite this significant gap, B.C. is also one of the few provinces in the country without pay transparency legislation (which requires the disclosure of wage gaps) or proactive pay equity legislation (which requires that employers take action to close wage gaps). Other provinces that have enacted pay equity laws include Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Quebec.

“The cost of wage discrimination over the course of someone’s career can be staggering and has significant impacts on the social and economic well-being of countless women, families and seniors,” said Commissioner Kasari Govender. “Pay transparency legislation by itself can provide us with more information about the problem—if it is robust enough—but if it doesn’t lay the foundation for complementary pay equity legislation, we will not have the policy tools necessary to correct it,” she concluded.

A critical element missing from this bill is an absence of accountability mechanisms. This legislation includes no enforcement mechanisms like fines or other penalties for non-compliance. In addition, the absence of a centralized database aimed at assessing pay gaps or change over time makes it incredibly difficult to chart a path towards genuine equity.

Commissioner Govender continued: “Voluntary pay transparency policies do not meaningfully reduce pay gaps, especially for those who face intersecting forms of discrimination in the workplace. I am concerned that this Bill does not do what pay transparency legislation is intended to do, which is to provide enough information to generate sector-level or system-level data, which in turn is intended to drive systems-level change.”

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada, “Archived - Average and median gender wage ratio, annual, inactive,” *Statistics Canada*, January 6, 2023, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410034002>.

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— Kasari Govender, B.C.’s Human Rights Commissioner

“I’ve worked on gender equality issues for most of my career, and my mother worked on them before me. Generation after generation, we are talking about the same issues. I am concerned that this legislation will be seen as a solution to the gender pay gap, when in reality B.C. is still decades behind other provinces. This legislation only inches us further along—when what we really need are strides towards a more equal economy,” said Human Rights Commissioner Kasari Govender.

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## Media contact

To request an interview with Commissioner Kasari Govender, please contact Charlotte Kingston, Director, Communications, at [media@bchumanrights.ca](mailto:media@bchumanrights.ca) or 1-250-216-4534.

## Media kit

[Download](#) our media kit for images of Commissioner Kasari Govender.

## About BCOHRC

BC’s Office of the Human Rights Commissioner exists to address the root causes of inequality, discrimination and injustice in B.C. by shifting laws, policies, practices and cultures. We do this work through education, research, advocacy, inquiry and monitoring. Learn more at: [bchumanrights.ca](http://bchumanrights.ca)

## About the Commissioner

B.C.’s Human Rights Commissioner, Kasari Govender, started her five-year term on Sept. 3, 2019. Since then, our Office has been working swiftly to build a strong team, to listen deeply to the concerns of British Columbians, to deliver education materials on our rights and responsibilities, to issue policy guidance to protect marginalized communities and to lay a human rights-based foundation for our work. As an independent officer of the Legislature, the Commissioner is uniquely positioned to ensure human rights in B.C. are protected, respected and advanced on a systemic level throughout our society.

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