

NDP candidate accuses Liberals of waffling on pay equity issue

By LISA RUTLEDGE
The Herald

Since 1987 the Liberals have paid only lip-service to the issue of pay-equity leaving more than 100,000 women near the poverty line, North Halton New Democrat Noel Duignan charged.

In a press release, Mr. Duignan stated that working Ontario women, about 1.9 million, should count as much as the "Liberal's big money friends."

There is a problem with Liberal legislation in that it excludes about 100,000 women, said Mr. Duignan in an interview. In 1986, amendments to pay equity legislation would have included more child care workers, library workers and women in the garment industry, he said.

In 1990 the Liberals rejected two of three proposals from the Pay Equity Commission that would have increased wages for women in these sectors, Mr. Duignan argued. Even after 16 years with a company, a woman worker in the garment industry will only earn about \$6 to \$7 an hour, he added.

In his release he stated "The Liberals' failure to make fair wages the law in Ontario is hurting hundreds of thousands of women and their families... the Liberals have shown that they are much more interested in making sure their corporate buddies don't have to pay fair wages to women than they are in ending discrimination..."

Mr. Elliot, who is a member of the Liberal government, should

have stood up for women and be counted, Mr. Duignan said.

Mr. Duignan said the Liberals have managed to skirt the issue of pay equity by claiming that in some industries there are no males to draw conclusions about equal pay for equal work. As minister responsible for women's issues in 1986, Ian Scott, promised women working in industry where there are few men would receive wage adjustments on the same timetables as other workers, explained Mr. Duignan in the release. He added that nothing came of this promise.

It shouldn't matter if there are any males in a particular industry, said Mr. Duignan in the interview. Comparative jobs can be found in other industries, he said. He believes pay equity can still be implemented in any industry, with or without sales.

However, Mr. Elliot insists there has been much mileage in the area. Even the Toronto Stock Exchange has undergone a major review and in the last 18 months to two years there has been increased funding in the social services area, he added.

Women working in industries such as the garment industry must receive wage increases but not only to equate their wages with men's, said Mr. Elliot, in an interview. Pay equity is important but minimum wages must increase regardless, he explained. "We have to pay people for an honest day's work," he added.

North Halton has experienced the effects of pay equity, said Mr.

Elliot. There have been significant gains for Red Cross home visitation workers and "sizeable" increases for employees at the North Halton Association for the Developmentally Handicapped, he argued.

Mr. Elliot said he has been working with other regions, including Dufferin and Peel to bring wages "up to snuff."

The equation of supply and demand creates another problem in that jobs in which pay equity is an issue don't attract enough students. "If the pay is too low they can't get people into the field," he said. A reason wages remain low is that industries, such as the garment industry, attract new immigrants who often settle for the offered wages, Mr. Elliot said.

Women who re-enter the work force after raising children may not always worry about that last dollar because there is a second income coming in, he said. However, many don't have that option, he added.

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Protest votes not recorded

Voters in the riding of Halton North, dissatisfied with all of the parties and thinking of registering a protest vote, will find it's impossible to accomplish.

Halton North Returning Officer, Don McMillan, said Wednesday, people have been known to arrive at a polling station, accept a ballot and then return it asking that their action be recorded as a protest vote. But he said when this happens the action is officially recorded as a refusal to vote. There were 16 such recordings in Halton North during the 1987 provincial election, said Mr. McMillan. He estimates there will be 43,000 registered

voters in the riding for the Sept. 6 election.

When asked if declined votes are analysed following an election to help find out the mood of the electorate, Mr. McMillan replied no.

Other types of votes that go unrecognized occur when a voter marks more than one candidate or leaves the ballot blank, said Mr. McMillan.

There were 109 ballots in which more than one circle was marked and 41 unmarked ballots during the last election, he said.

PC leader visits riding

Provincial Progressive Conservative Party leader, Mike Harris, will visit the Milton Fairgrounds during the 30th annual Steam Era Saturday, the party announced Wednesday.

Local candidate Dave Whiting will accompany the party announced Wednesday.

Local candidate Dave Whiting will accompany the party leader and the two will be at the fairgrounds from 11:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. Mr. Harris will participate in the festivities and talk to the public about local issues. He may also make some sort of provincial-related announcement, said Mr. Whiting.

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