

Pay Equity Report

Pay Equity, What Is It and
How It Can Affect You?

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The purpose of this study, commissioned by the AUPE Provincial Executive, is an introduction to the issues of pay equity and an initial look at how that affects jobs within AUPE.

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section one:

Pay Equity, What Is It and How It Can Affect You?

What do you think of when you hear the words “pay equity?” Does it mean a person getting a wage that he or she can survive on or that a woman gets the same wage as a man for the same job or “equal pay for work of equal value”?

Pay Equity: Starting With A Very Simple Understanding

Pay equity can be expressed in many ways but in every instance it can be simplified as this: *A fair wage*.

So what makes a wage fair? There is currently no widely accepted consensus on how this should be done. This paper is an introduction to the issue and an explanation of why the practical application of pay equity is complicated but important and not impossible to do.

When talking about pay equity, the term pay inequity is encountered. If pay equity means a fair wage, then pay inequity (the opposite of pay equity) is used to describe a situation where an unfair wage exists.

Some common misunderstandings about pay equity need to be addressed. Pay equity is often confused with two other important and distinct but separate issues - pay equality and a living wage.

Pay Equity Is Not Pay Equality

Pay equality is: the rate of pay within the same job should be equal for a man, woman, a person of a different race or ability or any other factor. Pay equality is the concept that most often gets confused with pay equity but they are not the same thing.

Pay equality is a well-known and generally accepted concept. Rarely, today in Canada, will you find anyone attempting to justify, let alone, pay a woman less for the same job that a man does. Pay inequality is a very obvious form of discrimination. Because it is so obvious and believed by many to be a resolved issue, pay equity advocacy is hindered if it is confused with pay inequality.

Pay Equity Is Not A Living Wage

Another concept that gets confused with pay equity is the belief that it means a living wage. A living wage is the minimum wage a person needs to survive and prosper in our society. This is different from the minimum wage, a wage that is dictated by legislation as the minimum wage an employer must pay an employee. Most often, the minimum wage is lower than the living wage.

A living wage is a serious issue to be taken on by AUPE and could be argued as a more important issue than pay equity. The AUPE Pay Equity Committee believes it is possible for AUPE to advocate for pay equity without harming the fight for a living wage.

Pay Equity: An Expression Commonly Used In Addressing Gender Discrimination

The most common expression of pay inequity is summarized by the phrase “equal pay for work of equal value.” This phrase is associated usually with gender based pay inequity (or more precisely gender based comparative pay inequity) and the logic behind this unfairness is:

- a) There are jobs where men are usually the majority of workers in that job. These are male dominated jobs.
- b) There are jobs which women are usually the majority of workers in that job. These are female dominated jobs.
- c) The pay inequity occurs when a male dominated job that has the same value as a female dominated job is paid more than the female dominated job.

Defining “Same Value”: The Complex But Not Impossible Issue Of Pay Equity

One of the major roadblocks to gender based pay equity is that there is not a simple or fast way to decide if two jobs have the “same value.” This does not mean pay equity is impossible to achieve but to gain it requires time and resources.

To demonstrate this, take a commonly used example of gender based comparative pay inequity.

A caretaker does the same work as a housekeeper thus these two positions are of the “same value.” The unfairness occurs because housekeeping, which is traditionally done by women, is paid less than a caretaker, which is traditionally done by men.

No two jobs should ever be considered to be of the “same value” based on a generalized impression of what they involve. On the surface the situation of these two positions seem like a pay inequity situation but, to be fair, the details of the actual job need to be reviewed. Suppose the caretaker but not the housekeeper does heavy lifting, should this be reflected in a wage difference?

A generalized impression is a valid starting point in recognizing when pay inequity occurs, but advocating for pay equity in any situation always requires examining the specific details of that situation.

For pay equity reform to occur, a method is required to compare the various factors about the two jobs which will, at the end of the process, produce a valid argument about the degree of pay inequity. After that work is done, what is required is a method to repair that inequity.

Methods Of Dealing With Pay Equity Issues

Is there a best method to address pay equity? The answer, unfortunately, is not yet.

In other provinces there is legislation that has created a method to deal with implementing pay equity but the success of these pieces of legislation has not been great. These pieces of legislation have, however, legitimized the conversation of pay equity and created a framework to approach the issue.

There are six provinces that have enacted pay equity legislation in Canada. They are Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island and Quebec. Alberta, along with British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Saskatchewan and the Yukon has not¹. Three of the four provinces that do not have pay equity legislation have done work on developing a framework to address the issue. The province that has done no work on this is Alberta².

In future, the AUPE Pay Equity Committee wants to create an educational and political forum where discussion can occur about how best to achieve pay equity in Alberta and to educate our membership about the pros and cons of any particular method that has been already attempted. In this forum we hope to further explain why it is important for Alberta to have pay equity legislation.

Issues That Get In The Way Of Pay Equity Reform

Practical application of pay equity reform also has some other obstacles.

- Employers may have to pay more wages to staff when pay equity occurs and so the employer may oppose pay equity reform.
- Resolving pay equity issues also requires information from the employers that they may be reluctant to share.
- Some people mischaracterize pay equity reform, for example calling it arbitrary and subjective or labeling it as “extreme socialism”³.
- There is difficulty in figuring out what people are getting paid. A person’s wage is private. Pay equity advocacy requires a way to respect a person’s privacy, while figuring out a way to estimate what a group of people is paid on average. In the case of this paper, the wage rates were derived from AUPE collective agreements.
- There is great variation in how jobs are classified. In a perfect world, the work we do should be reflected accurately by the job classification process and a main document it produces, the job description. Pay equity reform is often hindered by the inconsistencies in these two things, at times within an employer and often across employers. This subject will be dealt with in more detail in another section of this report.

¹See Human Resources and Social Development Canada. (2006). Pay Equity Legislation in Canada. Retrieval at www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/lp/spila/elli/eslc/pay_equity_narrative.pdf.

Also Human Resources and Social Development Canada. (2006). Pay Equity Legislation in Canada By Jurisdiction. Retrieval at www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/lp/spila/elli/eslc/table_pay_equity.pdf

²According to the Ontario’s Equal Pay Coalition. See www.equalpaycoalition.org/other_prov.php

³Clark, D. (1993, February 22). The Perils of Pay Equity. Alberta Report / Newsmagazine.

Pay Inequity Has Many Faces

Pay inequity comes in many forms. Gender based comparative pay inequity is probably the most significant and wide spread form but is not the only type. Considering this type of pay inequity, as the totality of the pay equity issue, is much like saying that Ontario is all there is to Canada. Yes it's big... but it is not the whole story.

AUPE is confronted with another instance of pay inequity that occurs with the wage difference between Mental Health Aides (MHA) and Nursing Attendants (NA). The issue is not centered on gender but that these two professions, which have similar duties and education requirements, should be compensated fairly in relation to each other. This could be described as profession type based pay inequity but the central issue is: what is a fair wage for MHAs and NAs to have? See Graph 3A & 3B for more detail on this issue.

Another issue has been brought to the attention of the AUPE Pay Equity Committee - the issue of how practicum students in the field are paid for their work. Most often the case is not at all. An apprentice receives a wage dependent on their skill level and the stage of their educational program. When a student works for an employer as the "practicum" part of their educational program, there is often no pay at all. While the argument may be that these students receive "compensation" by learning about the work environment, it is fundamentally wrong to pay them nothing for the work that they do. AUPE needs to work with educational institutions and employers to correct this inequity.

Pay inequity can occur because of age, race, ability and other factors. It is not solely a gender issue. It is natural that the push for pay equity have a large gender focus because it is an issue that has a consequence to over half of our population.

How Does Pay Inequity Affect You?

The end result of any wage inequity is that a person does not have the money that is rightfully theirs. While theft and getting paid unfairly less are two different things the end result is the same. You are unjustly poorer.

The nature of pay inequity is that it is possible for it occur without being noticed by those affected. Much like an unnoticed weekly theft of \$10 that goes on for years, the long-term consequences are significant. A person, who is paid \$10 less every week for years, faces the same loss. This idea is aptly demonstrated by the case that gender based pay inequity contributes to poverty of women in their retirement years.

An unperceived injustice or one that is discovered after the fact is still an injustice. In the tradition of collective union spirit, what harms one of us harms us all.

sectiontwo:

Job Classification

The Jungle Of Job Classification

The least difficult way to address the pay equity issue is to examine how an employer classifies and documents a particular job. Least difficult, but far from easy and here is why:

An organization needs to establish a system to classify, document and sort the different positions it requires –what is required is a job classification system. The documents which the job classification system creates are largely within the domain of the employer and its purpose is primarily to run the job site. These documents are not designed to address pay equity issues and accessing and interpreting them can be difficult and frustrating. Another factor making pay equity reform difficult is that employers seldom use the same job classification system.

Some job classification systems are more useful in addressing the pay equity issue than others. Factors that make a job classification system fairer in addressing the pay equity issue are how well it addresses the following:

- Duties of the position;
- Workload;
- Working conditions;
- Responsibility;

- Impact of error;
- Supervisory and training roles;
- Educational requirements of the position that may be ongoing; and
- An appeal process in place to address any concerns with job classification issues.

AUPE represents workers within a wide range of employers. Of these, AUPE has determined a defined job classification system for some of them. Those systems are:

- Grade Methodology
- Hay Point Rating System
- Job Family Classification System
- Modified Hay Point Rating System (PREP)
- Point Rating System (Western Management Consultant)
- Watson Wyatt Point Rating System

A job classification system is not the primary source of inequity however depending on how it is set up and applied and the environment it is used in, it can certainly facilitate the existence of pay inequity.

For example the Hay Point Rating system uses four categories to classify jobs and is considered by many to be a fair classification system that can allow for job comparisons. The Alberta government, however, uses a modified version of the Hay Point Rating system called PREP, which does not encompass all four categories. Consequently, the Alberta government classification system is severely compromised as a tool to compare jobs. Therefore pay inequity is now far more difficult to discover if it is occurring within the Alberta Government Services.

Job Description: The Chase For A Comparison

Pay equity is a difficult concept to put into practice because there is no single consistent method to categorize work and to assign job titles to positions. For example, in the field of administrative/clerical, AUPE members have the following positions:

Positions Titles Of AUPE Members Within The Administrative/Clerical Field

Boards, Agencies & Local Governments	Education	Government Services	Health Care
Accounting Clerk II Accounts Receivable Clerk III Admin Support I, II, IV & V Admin Assistant Admin Officer I & II Admin Services I & II Admin Support I, II, III, IV & V Clerical Assistant/Receptionist Clerical/Administrative Clerk I, II, III & IV Clerk/Receptionist Receptionist Secretary I & II Unit Secretary Utility Clerk	Accounting Clerk I, II, III, IV & V Accounting Clerk/Cashier Accounts Payable Clerk Accounts Receivable Clerk Admin Program Assistant I, II Admin and Communications Coordinator Admin Assistant I, II & III Admin Course Assistant Admin Officer I, II Admin Support I, II, III, IV, V & VI Admin Support/Receptionist Admin/Clerical Support Admin/Purchasing Assistant Bookstore Clerk Bookstore Clerk/Cashier Buyer/Store Clerk Cashier/Billing Clerk Clerical Clerical Assistant Clerk I, II & III Clerk Typist Clerk Typist I & II Clerk/Cashier Assistant Receptionist/Office Support Receptionist/Switchboard Operator. Secretary	Admin Support 1 Admin Support 2 Admin Support 3 Admin Support 4 Admin Support 5 Admin Support 6	Accounting Clerk Admin Assistant Admin Support Worker III & IV Admin Assistant II Admin Officer I Admin Support I, II, III, IV & V Admin Support Worker Clerk I, II, III, IV, V & VI Clerk Junior Clerk Typist Clerk/Receptionist Receptionist I, II & III Secretary I, II, III & IV Unit Clerk Unit Clerk Nursing

How do all these positions relate to each other? Are positions with “clerk” in the title similar to a position that has “administrative”? How about “receptionist” or “secretary”? The answer is that it is impossible to know unless each and every one of these positions is examined in detail.

An initial analysis could occur by looking at positions that have the same name and occur across all four sectors. Administrative Support 4 (AS4) satisfies this criterion.

A claim can be made that an AS4 employed in the Boards, Agencies & Local Governments sector is equivalent to one working in Education sector, Government Services sector and in the Health Care sector.

An AS4 in 2007 has the starting wage, according to the collective agreements, in each sector of:

Administrative Support 4 Starting Wage Across Sectors			
Boards, Agencies & Local Governments	Education	Government Services	Health Care
\$19.95	\$17.52 ⁴	\$20.21	\$17.48

⁴The contract used in this example is currently in negotiations. This rate is a 5% general increase from 2006 that is assumed will be applied retroactively for 2007.

There is an obvious difference. The question then is, are these positions significantly different enough to justify the obvious wage difference or is this an example of pay inequity? The next step would be to examine what occurs in these positions and one method is to look at the job descriptions. These positions’ job descriptions, in the following picture, are laid out.

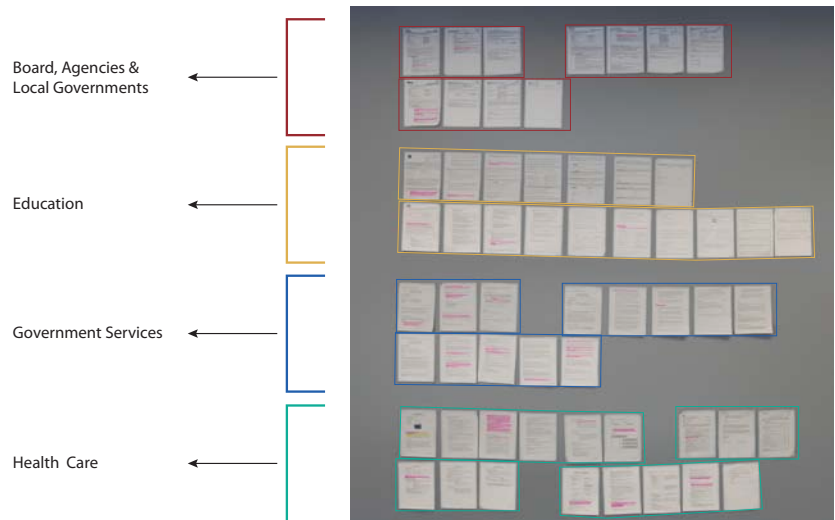
This picture demonstrates that these job descriptions vary in length and they also vary in style, format and content. A straight comparison between jobs then becomes very difficult and because of this we are still far from answering the question, are these jobs of the “same value?”

What is required then, is a valid method to examine these documents. Choosing one is not that easy as there is still much debate and conflict about how pay equity should be approached. Another issue that needs to be addressed is how accurately a job description describes the position.

A subjective analysis can be done, based upon a generalized impression, to initially look at the pay equity issues before undertaking an in-depth analysis. In this case, the generalized impression used is that an AS4 position is “a job that manages but does not create new information”.

Job duties, from these job descriptions, can be sorted into two categories. The first is common job duties for AS4s across sectors. The second is job duties that appear outside the usual role of AS4s based upon the generalized impression mentioned earlier.

Chasing The Comparison
Administrative Support 4 Job Descriptions Across Sectors



Common Job Duties For Administrative Support 4 Across Sectors

- Acquiring records, schedules, budgets and objects.
- Coordinating records, schedules, budgets and objects.
- Tracking records, schedules, budgets and objects.
- Producing records, schedules, budgets and objects.
- Verifying records, schedules, budgets and objects.
- Monitoring records, schedules, budgets and objects.
- Providing initial contact and information to the public.
- Providing typing, composition and other services in the creation of emails, letters, PowerPoint presentations and other paper and digitally based documents.

Job Duties Outside The Usual Role Of Administrative Support 4

- Defusing an angry person over the telephone or in person.
- Interpreting criminal code, legislation and regulation.
- Determining fines and bail.
- Deciding if a person is legitimately detained and not subject to criminal legislation.
- Assessing suicidal, mental illness or security concerns from file information.
- Creating an annual report.
- Reviewing research reports.
- Analyzing data.
- Training people and developing training material for the public on material that is unrelated to administration.

Are AS4s in any particular sector dealing with a pay inequity situation? There is enough information here to suggest this is possible. To fully answer this question though requires more detailed examination of the specific situation of each job.

If, after full analysis, an inequity is discovered, then comes the important question -what should be done about it and, even more importantly, what do the people doing this work want done given the obstacles of achieving pay equity?

Addressing pay equity requires navigating through these and other questions.

sectionthree:

Wage Comparisons and Pay Equity

The general understanding of “job” within any given classification may not necessarily reflect the actual work performed or the specific duties that is paid a particular wage. Particular job classifications have inconsistencies between employers, worksites and sectors. Therefore, the general understanding and not the specific job classification method is the best starting point for this particular analysis and study. We recognize that the general understanding of this issue is not the same for everyone. The following demonstrates the scope of this study based upon this principle.

Graph #1: Starting Wages Of The Custodial Classification

Overview Of Graph #1

The main purpose of the graph is to demonstrate how wage rates vary within the job category of custodial workers across various AUPE sectors. The analysis of this graph is subjective. Remember this is a generalized understanding of jobs within the “custodial” classification.

The generalized impression used in sorting the jobs in this field was “a job that provides cleaning services.” Custodial, as a term used in this context, has been used very liberally so this would include jobs such as facilities management, caretaker, housekeeper, laundry services worker and so on.

Data Source Of Graph #1

The data for all the wage rates for jobs were retrieved from various 2007 unionized collective agreements covering AUPE members and from current available on-line, private sector “job postings” for jobs within Alberta.

Details About Graph #1

1. Each grouping of bars represents one collective agreement, or in the case of data outside of a collective agreement the private sector;
2. Each “bar” on the graph represents one specific job;
3. The highest starting rate was used, including private sector job postings that advertised a wage rate “range” (i.e. \$12.00/hr - \$15.00/hr);
4. Depending upon the date of ratification within 2007, the wage rates may vary;
5. The minimum wage rate used was \$8 an hour (representing the increase from \$7.00/hour in 2007);
6. The colours on the graph represent one sector. (Note: Not all collective agreements were reviewed within a sector);
7. Individual collective agreements are not identified for the purposes of this research.

Analysis Of Graph #1

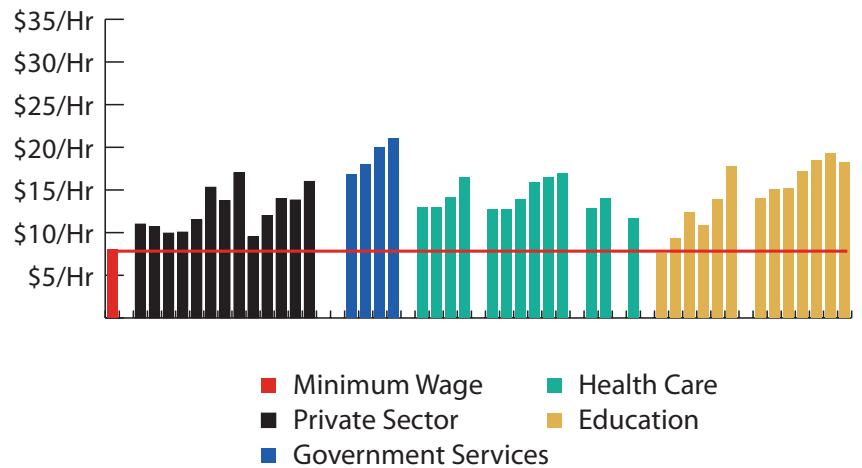
Upon review of the graph, one can conclude that the wages within the custodial job classification are very close to the minimum wage. It also demonstrates the variance of wages within classifications between sectors. There is one job classification that shows below minimum wage, but this is attributed to the collective agreement in place prior to the increase in the minimum wage in September 2007.

The stepping pattern in this graph can be attributed to the different levels (ie. caretaker level 1/ caretaker level 2 etc.) within a classification. Usually this is the case, but in other circumstances, may be attributed to jobs with different titles.

Conclusion About Graph #1

Most wages shown on the graph are in fact above minimum wage, but this raises the question: Can AUPE members and members of the public sector “live” on minimum wage in Alberta? Should AUPE be advocating for an appropriate “living wage” amount to be negotiated into every collective agreement? That question may have to be addressed at some time in the future. How does this issue relate to pay equity? How can AUPE address pay equity through negotiations?

Starting Wages Of The Custodial Classification



Graph #2: Starting Wages Of The Administrative/Clerical Classification

Overview Of Graph #2

The main purpose of the graph is to demonstrate how wage rates vary within the job category of administrative/clerical across various AUPE sectors. The analysis of this graph is subjective. Remember this is a generalized understanding of jobs within the “administrative/clerical” classification.

The generalized impression used in sorting the jobs in this field was “a job that manages but does not create new information.”

This analysis could allow for jobs that should be included/ excluded in this category or vice versa. The graphs also do not take into consideration shift differentials, location or overtime benefits, only the basic hourly wage.

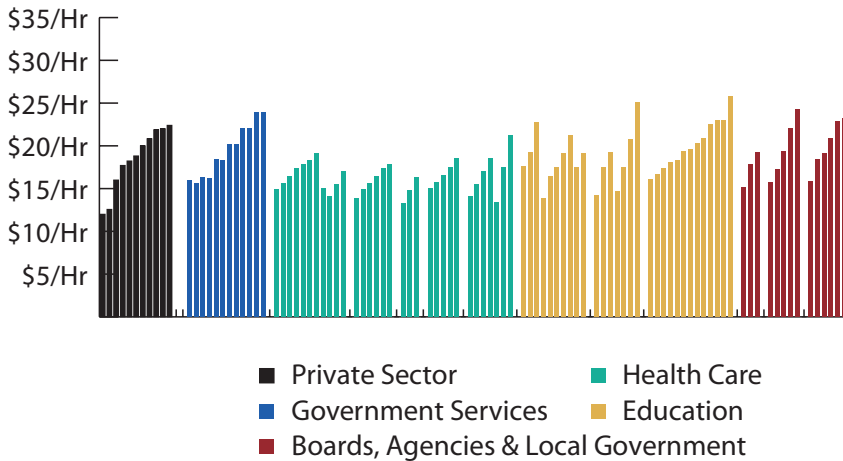
Data Source Of Graph #2

The data for all the wage rates for jobs were retrieved from various 2007 unionized collective agreements covering AUPE members and from current available on-line, private sector “job postings” for jobs within Alberta.

Details About Graph #2

1. Each grouping of bars represents one collective agreement, or in the case of data outside of a collective agreement the private sector;
2. Each “bar” on the graph represents one specific job;
3. The highest starting rate was used, including private sector job postings that advertised a wage rate “range” (i.e. \$12.00/hr - \$15.00/hr);
4. Depending upon the date of ratification within 2007, the wage rates may vary;
5. The colours on the graph represent one sector. (Note: Not all collective agreements were reviewed within a sector);
6. Individual collective agreements are not identified for the purposes of this research.

Starting Wages Of The Administrative/Clerical Classification



Analysis Of Graph #2

This graph demonstrates the danger of solely relying upon a generalized impression to make an argument for pay equity because the jobs in the public sector appear to be on par or even better than those in other sectors. This may have occurred because of the sampling bias that occurs in using a generalized impression.

Also this graph suggests that for the health care sector its highest level administrative/clerical positions start at a lower rate than in the other sectors.

The stepping pattern in this graph can be attributed to the different levels (ie. clerk 1/clerk 2 etc.) within a classification. Usually this is the case, but in other circumstances, may be attributed to jobs with different titles.

Conclusion About Graph #2

This graph demonstrates that a generalized impression is a useful tool to indicate where further research is required.

In this instance further research is required to appropriately measure if the private sector is truly paying wages for administrative/clerical positions as indicated by the graph. Secondly is there is a significant pay inequity in the wage levels of high-end administrative/clerical positions in the health care sector?

Graph #3A And #3B: Examining The Pay Equity Situation Of Mental Health Aides And Nursing Attendants

Overview of Graph #3A And #3B

AUPE is experiencing a pay equity situation between those who work as Mental Health Aides (MHAs) and those who work as a Nursing Attendants (NAs).

According to ANC Multi-Employer Collective Agreement, NAs made from 2004 to 2007, on average 18% less than MHAs. With the new contract in 2008, NAs received an increase in wages of 15% while MHAs received an increase of 5%. As a result of the new contract, NAs make now, on average, only 7.5% less than MHAs.

The pay equity question situation in this case has two perspectives: One perspective is that NAs and MHAs are positions of the "same value" and therefore should be paid the same. The other perspective is that they are not positions of the "same value" and that this justifies an appropriate wage difference.

Data Source Of Graph #3A And #3B

The data for the wage rates for jobs were taken from the new (expires 2011) and the previous (expires 2008) ANC Multi-Employer Collective Agreement between AUPE and Health Board of Alberta Services.

Details about Graph #3A And #3B

For Graph #3A

- Each "line" on the graph represents the wage rate progression of the year 2004, 2008 or 2011. The first point in a line represents what a person, who is starting, would receive as a wage. The last point in a line represents what a person, who has 8 years of employment, would receive. Each line comes from data within a specific year.

For Graph #3B

- Each "line" on this graph represents a starting wage from 2004 to 2011. The first point in a line represents what a person would receive as starting wage in 2004 and the last point on the line is what a person would receive as a starting wage in 2011. Each line is created from data that spans across separate years.

For Both Graph #3A and #3B

- All Wage rates have been adjusted to 2008 dollars;
- Wage rates before 2008 have been adjusted through the recorded Consumer Price Index (CPI) annual average inflation rate;
- Wage rates after 2008 have been adjusted through an estimation of future inflation rate of 2.24%, which is the average CPI inflation rate of the last nine years.

Analysis Of Graph #3A And #3B

In Graph 3A the wage rate of the MHAs in all years plateau after 5 years. In the year 2004 NAs who had eight years of employment are paid nearly \$2 less than MHAs who had 8 years of employment. However this changes in the year 2008 and 2011 where the NAs who had 8 years of employment are only paid around 30 cents less than MHAs who had 8 years of employment.

Graph 3B demonstrates that from year 2007 to 2008, with the introduction of the new collective agreement NAs have received a bigger increase than the MHAs had received. Yet they are still paid less than MHAs

Conclusion About Graph #3A And #3B

This situation demonstrates some of the difficulty dealing with implementing pay equity. For some people MHAs and NAs are position of the same value and should be paid the same. For others they are positions of different value and should be paid differently.

Is it possible to reconcile these different views? What is the right course of action for AUPE to take regarding this situation? What is the fair thing to do?

Graph #4A And 4B: Examining The Big Picture Of Pay Equity

Overview of Graph #4A And #4B

Pay equity is about receiving a fair wage. What occurs when the wage rates mentioned in the previous graphs are compared to some other jobs that are, as some may state, of higher value? For instance, what about the job to run the Alberta government or Alberta's health board? Would this difference be fair?

Data Source of Graph #4A And #4B

The data for all the wage rates for jobs were reviewed from various collective agreements, and from current available on-line, private sector "job postings" and newspaper reports. Graph #4A and #4B are built in part from Graph #1, #2, and #3A. Graph #4A and #4B have these parts labeled. For information regarding these parts please see the earlier graphs.

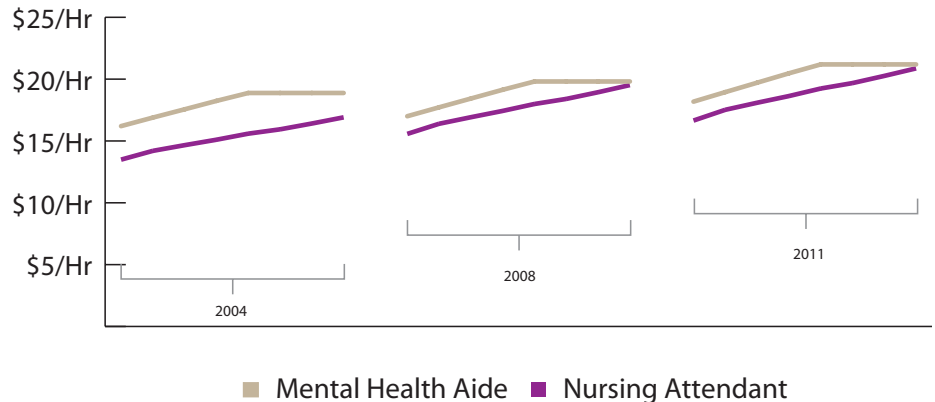
Details about Graph #4A And #4B

For Graph #4A & #4B

1. Each "bar" on the graph represents one specific job;
2. Each "line" (after the bars) on the graph represents the wage rate progression of Mental Health Aides (MHAs) and Nursing Attendants (NAs) for the year 2004, 2008 and 2011;
3. The colours on the graph are consistent with the colours used in the previous graphs.

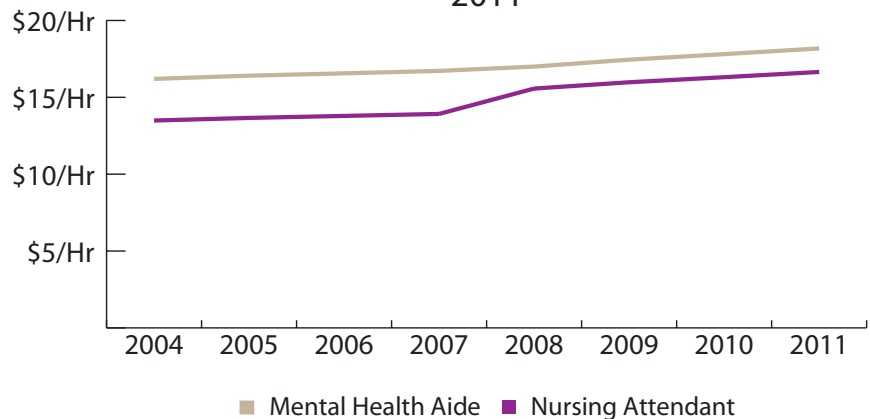
Graph #3A

Wage scale for Mental Health Aides And Nursing Attendants in 2004, 2008 and 2011



Graph #3B

Starting Wages Of Mental Health Aides And Nursing Attendants from 2004 to 2011

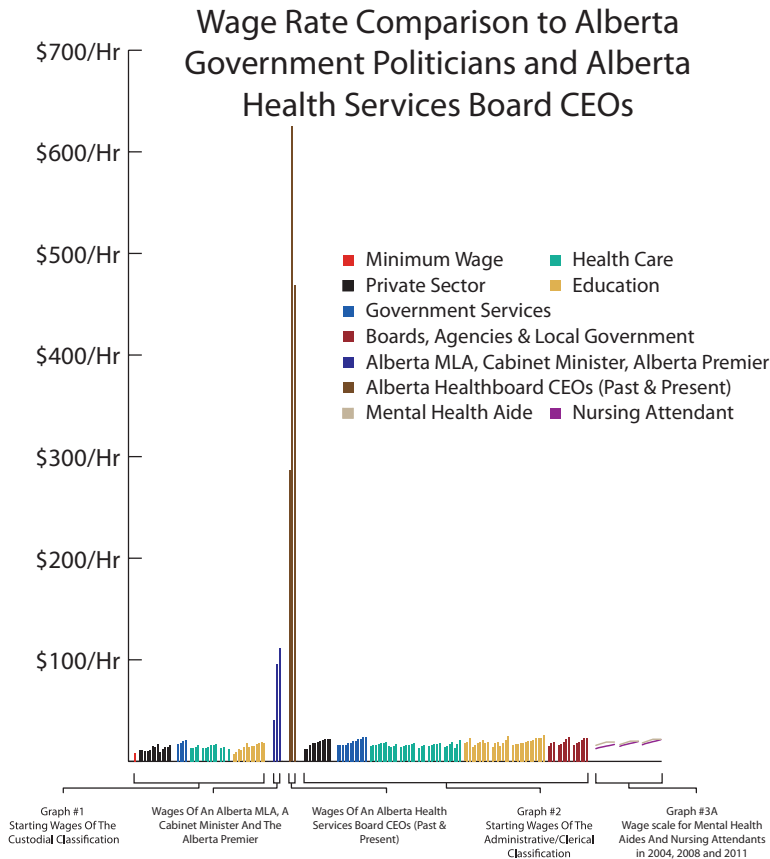


Graph #4A **Analysis of Graph #4A And #4B**

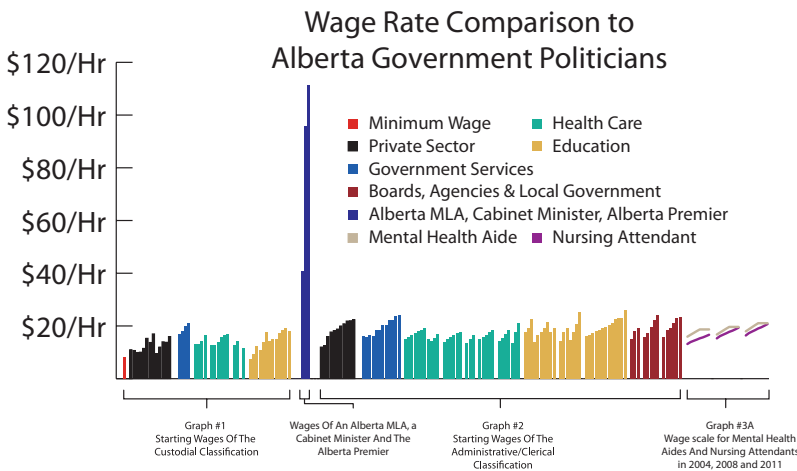
The graphs demonstrate that differences in fair pay among common jobs pales in comparison when they are compared to jobs in Alberta that are at top of the hierarchy of “value”.

Conclusion About Graph #4A And #4B

One of the struggles of pay equity is that it comes in many forms and each requires a different approach. The inequity demonstrated in these graphs between those running our government, the health board and the rest of us requires a different tactic than how we address the pay inequity between, for example, Mental Health Aides and Nursing Attendants. Choices will need to be made about which pay inequity situation should receive the most focus.



Graph #4B



sectionfour:

Conclusion

The struggle for pay equity can be described as a “wicked problem” or maybe more appropriately a “social mess”⁵ because it is a problem that is:

- Complicated, complex and ambiguous;
- There is considerable uncertainty about what the conditions are, let alone what the appropriate actions might be;
- People who have different points of view see the problem differently; and
- There is conflict over which value has the most importance.

Dealing with a wicked problem doesn't mean it is impossible to deal with, but that the solution is not readily apparent. There is no quick fix or simple solution for the struggle for pay equity.

What is required is sustained effort to address the issue, which is why AUPE created the AUPE Pay Equity Committee, which was established with the mandate to:

- i) Educate - to educate members of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees (AUPE), and the public on the issues related to Pay Equity;
- ii) Lobby - all levels of government, various unions in Alberta and the public for legislation;
- iii) Information - establish and maintain a database of current information and legislation related to Pay Equity;
- iv) Action - prepare and present policies, briefs and information of concern as required;
- v) Research - Pay Equity issues within AUPE in relation to classifications, gender and systemic discrimination; and
- vi) Research - compare rates of pay and classifications within the private sector - research initiatives.

The AUPE Pay Equity Committee is committed to working in the short term and long term to address this issue. In the short term it is working on creating an AUPE Pay Equity Policy statement and establishing an Alberta based pay equity coalition, much like the Ontario one that spear headed pay equity legislation in that province.

The Pay Equity Committee is dedicated to educating and informing the AUPE membership about achieving pay equity given the difficulties of the issue. In the tradition of true trade unionism, the AUPE Pay Equity Committee believes that AUPE is up to the challenge of taking on this issue

Pay equity is about a fair wage for all workers.

⁵This definition for “wicked problem” and “social mess” comes from Robert E. Horn's paper Knowledge Mapping for Complex Social Messes which can be retrieved online at www.stanford.edu/~rhorn/images/SpchPackard/spchKnwldgPACKARD.pdf