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Gender equality in the workplace worth fighting for

One of my readers sent me a letter recently, asking I write a column on the treatment of women in the workplace, and I thought, what better a time to write this article than Mother's Day?

Canada is a fairly progressive country; we are technically advanced, we believe in a middle class, and we promote equal education and healthcare access for all. We've even had a female prime minister, Rt. Hon. Kim Campbell.

Yet, in many workplaces in our country, women are still treated unfairly, are overworked and underpaid. We can argue that some men are treated this way as well, but for the sake of this article, I want to focus on the issue of discrimination against women in the workplace.

Statistics show women today still earn less income than men in equivalent roles. Studies have also shown women are not promoted as quickly or as frequently as men.

Women tend to work in lower paid occupations. However, even when women's income is measured up against their male counterparts, with similar education, skills and experience, they are still making less.

This gender wage gap is discrimination. Pay equity, meaning equal pay for work of equal value, is a fundamental human right. Employers should adopt policies to prevent unequal pay.

Women need to learn about fair-



SHARLENE MASSIE
About Staffing

ness and equality, what this means and what to do about it. Fear of being laid off for standing up for oneself in this country is ridiculous. Women are equal in nature, but often take on more work than they can handle.

Many women are juggling full-time jobs while raising their children, maintaining a household and caring for elderly family members. Some women are the sole breadwinners for their families and out of desperation to keep food on the table, remain in jobs where they are treated poorly.

But women need to take ownership of their situations and realize it's up to us to stand up for ourselves, say no when needed and set the limits and boundaries on what we are willing to do and at what cost.

We are certainly as capable as men at forging any path we choose, as has been demonstrated by the many strong female leaders of our history. These influential women set the boundaries, spoke up when treatment was unfair and said no when they didn't want to do something or could not.

We should be proud of our female heritage and we should all aspire to that kind of fairness! Let's continue to raise the bar on equality and set the example for the women of tomorrow. Have a great Mother's Day!

Sharlene Massie is the CEO of About Staffing Ltd., a dynamic personnel agency specializing in direct-hire and temporary placements. Questions for Sharlene? Visit the About Staffing website at www.aboutstaffing.com and click on the link under the Sun logo. This article may be reproduced or transmitted if done so in its entirety, including this copyright line: Copyright 2011, by About Staffing Ltd., all rights reserved.

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