

Routine Proceedings

that those public servants affected by pay discrimination, male as well as female, should be forced to shoulder the burden of any further inevitable delays.

• (1220)

Therefore, I am announcing today that the lump sum settlement payments will be made retroactive to March 31, 1985, the month in which I announced the establishment of the joint union-management committee. I believe this is fair to the employees concerned and consistent with the spirit of natural justice to which our government is committed.

In real terms, this represents a retroactive payment that averages approximately \$4,800 per person affected, and these employees reside in communities from one end of the country to the other.

[*Translation*]

That is just an average, and does not reflect individual circumstances in specific positions. All levels of each occupational group will receive the same amount, and we will make strenuous efforts to deliver back pay cheques as soon as possible in the next few months. This means, for example, that a secretary working in a point-of-entry customs office could receive up to \$5,900 or a clerk working in an Environment Canada district office could receive up to \$3,500.

Decisions being announced today will involve adjustments for four of the nine female-dominated groups. The 70,000 employees belonging to these four groups represent more than 90 per cent of all employees in female-dominated groups. It appears that the work of a fifth group, data processing, was not under-valued. The four remaining groups have already received equal pay for work of equal value adjustments.

Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out earlier, although a number of lesser points remain to be settled before the committee can finalize its work, there was obviously a case for immediate action.

I want to give the House the assurance that although we are acting now, this does not prejudice any conclu-

sions that might be reached by the Canadian Human Rights Commission on matters that are pending.

I want to make it very clear today that I am announcing entitlements based upon an independent assessment of what these jobs are worth, in relation to other jobs of equal and similar value. They reflect the law of the land and our commitment to applying fairly the principle of equal pay for work of equal value.

[*English*]

It is my belief that all members of this House will applaud the initiative that I am announcing today. I am convinced that this demonstration of our commitment will send the right signal to all employers across this country, whether or not they fall under federal jurisdiction. We are serious about equal pay for work of equal value and we will continue to do our utmost to improve the economic equality of women in this country.

Implementing equal pay for work of equal value in business, in industry and in government is necessary for economic progress. But, more than that, it is a critical social issue of national importance. We cannot move forward as a nation unless we are willing to move forward together as a nation of equals.

Economic discrimination between men and women cannot be tolerated. It is an affront to the value that we as Canadians espouse; it runs contrary to the goals that we all share; and it limits the ability of every Canadian to give what they have to offer to build a future for the nation as a whole.

As I said earlier, ending economic discrimination and ensuring the full participation of women in Canadian society have been basic goals of this government since 1984. Because of this commitment I believe that it is incumbent upon this government to demonstrate leadership and make progress wherever possible, and it is in this spirit that I am making this announcement today. To delay any further, to wait until all the i's are dotted and the t's crossed, does not demonstrate that spirit and does not demonstrate leadership.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, I believe this settlement is a reasonable one based as it is upon a statistically-sound methodology and will be welcomed by those affected, especially women in the public service. Public servants, no matter