

SECTION 3

INNOVATIVE WORKPLACE PRACTICES

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This overview of innovative or special interest provisions is drawn from a summary of 90 collective agreements that were settled in September, October, November and December 2000.

Duration

Contrary to a recent trend that has been observed for some time now, most of the collective agreements signed during the selected period had a duration of 36 months or less. More precisely, for 54 agreements, i.e., 60 per cent, the duration was 24 or 36 months (15 and 39 respectively). Even more surprising, when adding the other agreements with a duration under 36 months, **80 per cent of the new collective agreements** fall into the category of agreements with a duration of **36 months and less**. Only four collective agreements had a duration of 60 months or five years and more, with two being in effect until 2006 (Zehrs Markets and United Food and Commercial Workers International Union).

Committees

It seems that the joint committee option is still very popular when it comes to discussing or implementing new projects. In fact, 22 collective agreements refer to the creation of at least one new joint committee during the life of the agreement. It is worth noting the wide array of issues discussed in these committees as well as the high number of organizations planning to form more than one committee. Moreover, in several cases these would be ad hoc committees. Among issues dealt within committees were the following: the establishment of a workplace child care facility; staffing of positions; disability management; working hours; job sharing; review of fringe benefits; review of grievance procedure; teleworking; and mutual respect and dignity.

The four collective agreements signed between the City of Vancouver, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, Ray-Cam Cooperative Association and Britannia Community Services Centre Society, and Canadian Union of Public Employees, plan for the set-up, in the four months following ratification, of a committee responsible for drawing up a letter of agreement **in order to identify the applicable conditions for telework**. Recommendations from the committee would be discussed during the next round of negotiations; upon approval of the parties however, some of the recommendations could be carried out before the start of the negotiations. The agreement between the Regional Municipality of York Police Services Board and the Regional Municipality of York Police Association includes a provision for the creation of a committee whose mandate is to discuss the delivery of a **job-sharing program**. If the parties fail to come to a mutual agreement, **an arbitrator will have power to decide whether such a program must be implemented and to determine the requirements**. Following a challenging negotiation process, Cara Operations Ltd. from British Columbia and Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union agreed in a letter of understanding that a **committee on mutual respect and dignity** should be established with the goal of finding solutions to improve labour-management relations. According to the agreement, the first meeting is to be held with the participation of a facilitator during the month following ratification.

Training

The two agreements ratified by the Regional Municipality of Peel Police Services Board, Ontario, and the Regional Municipality of Peel Police Association contain a provision awarding **an allowance for occupational training applying to the spouse**. Moreover, the PipeLine Contractors

Association of Canada and the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada provide for an **international training fund**.

Compensation and Working Conditions

The Aluminerie de Bécancour inc. and the Fédération des syndicats du secteur de l'aluminium inc. have negotiated, in addition to an annual wage adjustment, a cost-of-living allowance clause. Furthermore, the two agreements signed by Air Canada and Air Canada Pilots Association and by the National Automobile, Aerospace, Transportation and General Workers Union of Canada, contain a provision stipulating that the wage adjustment that had already been negotiated for the last two years of the agreement will be reopened if the Consumer Price Index for the preceding year exceed the planned adjustments by over 1.0 per cent. Similarly, the agreement between British Columbia Ferry Corporation and British Columbia and Marine Workers Union ties the wage adjustment for the last year to the full British Columbia Consumer Price Index.

Union Gas and the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada have agreed on implementing a **flex benefits program** as defined in a **core plus options** plan. Under this plan, the company continues to offer a basic plan that includes extended medical coverage, dental coverage, life insurance, accident insurance and long-term disability

insurance. Adding to this basic coverage are options that can be bought by the employer using credits allocated to employees according to their status as full- or part-time workers, plus a percentage of annual salary. Moreover, Union Gas offers to current employees the **opportunity to choose** irreversibly **among three new types of pension funds** or to stay with the existing one. New employees will choose from three new options.

At Union Gas, a negotiated provision relates to the **maintenance of the established employer-employee status during work slowdown periods**. The provision identifies a series of measures that can be applied to maintain the employment if so desired. These measures include: job sharing, reduction in work hours, relocation aid, participation to special projects, retraining, leave without pay or voluntary termination of employment.

Labour Relations

In a letter of agreement signed between Zehrs Markets, Ontario, and United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, the company commits itself not to layoff any full-time employee during the life of the collective agreement and furthermore, to hire 300 new full-time clerks during the same period. In another aspect, Entourage Technology Solutions Inc, in Ontario and Quebec, and the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada have introduced a new pre-arbitration step that involves the union representative at the national level and the human resources director in the grievance procedure.