

INNOVATIVE WORKPLACE PRACTICES

Bruce Aldridge
Workplace Information Directorate
Labour Program, Human Resources Development Canada

This overview of innovative or special interest provisions is derived from a summary of 95 collective agreements that settled between November 2000 and May 2001. Of this number, 48 include provisions deemed innovative or of particular interest.

Duration

As noted in recent settlements, a majority of the collective agreements signed during this selected period had a contract duration of 36 months or less (88 per cent of agreements reported). Three agreements had a duration of 60 months: Emergency Health Services Commission, province-wide, British Columbia and Canadian Union of Public Employees with an expiry date of March 31, 2005; Fletcher's Fine Foods Limited, Vancouver, British Columbia and United Food and Commercial Workers, expiring May 31, 2005; and Crompton Company, Elmira, Ontario and United Steelworkers of America with an expiry date of May 31, 2006.

Compensation

Hydro One Inc., province-wide, Ontario and British Columbia Assessment Authority, province-wide, British Columbia, both negotiating with the Canadian Union of Public Employees, have a **gain-sharing plan** which relates to operational performance. The plan with Hydro One provides a potential of 4.0 per cent of base payroll and is based on corporate performance criteria, targets and lines of business initiatives, each with productivity, safety and customer service targets. The Assessment Authority plan states that the bargaining units' share of any savings realized through improved efficiency will be one-half of any gain in the percentage increase in productivity to a maximum of 3.0 per cent of wages earned in any year. A joint committee has been established to identify improvements in processes and work practices, enhancements in the delivery of services to the public and innovations and improved efficiencies throughout the organization. Canada Post continues a **team incentive plan** with the Association

of Postal Officials of Canada whereby employees, whose performance contributes to attaining targets to the long-term goals of the Corporation, could receive an annual maximum incentive potential of 4.0 per cent of base salary. The targets include financial performance, service performance and customer satisfaction. Also, an **individual incentive plan** could provide up to 4.5 per cent of an employee's base salary. The criteria for the level of payment is based on a comparison of the employee's actual performance against goals that the employee had set that year. The goals are based upon corporate key indicators.

Wage comparability was noted in three health sector reports. The Health Employers Association of British Columbia, Community Sub-Sector, and the British Columbia Hospital Employees Union have established a fund whereby the Association will contribute 3.0 per cent of straight time wages annually designed to achieve comparability between the wage and benefit provisions of the Facilities collective agreement. The distribution of the fund will be negotiated by the parties in each year of the agreement. The Provincial Health Authorities of Alberta and Canadian Union of Public Employees negotiated a wage provision for auxiliary nurses that provides adjustments in the first year sufficient to match wage rates in effect under the **Multi-Employer** and Alberta Union of Provincial Employees collective agreement. Settlement terms continue to include a **"me-too" clause** which stipulates that if the AUPE negotiations should provide an adjustment higher than the 4.0 percent and 3.5 per cent received in the second and third years by the auxiliary nurses, then they will receive the additional difference between the higher increases. All other employees received a first-year wage adjustment comprised of a general adjustment, an equity adjustment and a market rate adjustment. The Calgary Regional Health Authority, Acute-Care Sector, and the Canadian Union of Public Employees introduced a **wage parity** clause where all classifications will receive wage increases sufficient to match rates of pay covering similar employees employed at the University of Alberta Hospital in

Edmonton. Where no occupational match is found, a 4.0 per cent across the board increase will be applied to rates; where matching the rates does not correspond to a minimum increase of 4.0 per cent, a lump-sum payment of the difference will be paid.

Both the Statistical Survey Operations, Canada-wide, with the Public Service Alliance of Canada and Continuing Care Employers' Bargaining Association, Long-Term Care Facilities, various locations in Alberta, with the United Nurses of Alberta provide an **additional increment** to the maximum levels of the salary grid. The Alberta Treasury Branch, province-wide, and the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees added a 1.0 per cent increment in each year on the employee's anniversary. Employees whose salary goes beyond the maximum level will not receive the increment.

Overland Express, province-wide, Ontario and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters have eliminated a **two-tier wage** structure with lower rates for employees hired after September 12, 1993, and have introduced probationary rates. Effective in March 2002, new employees will be paid \$2.00 less than full hourly rate for their first twelve months and \$1.00 less for their second twelve months.

Fourteen settlements received either a **lump-sum payment** or a **signing bonus**. The lump-sum payments ranged from \$100 deposited to a Registered Retirement Savings Plan at La-Z-Boy Canada in Waterloo, Ontario to \$1,000 at Atlas Specialty Steels in Welland, Ontario. Signing bonuses ranged from \$250 at Dominion Castings in Hamilton, Ontario to an amount equal to 2.0 per cent of regular salary paid in calendar year 2000 for employees at Canadian Press and Broadcast News Limited in Toronto, Ontario.

Working Conditions

The University College of the Fraser Valley Board in Abbotsford, British Columbia and the Faculty and Staff Association have introduced **flexible benefits** whereby a **health spending account** will be established for each employee to be funded according to the differences between higher and lower cost options selected by the employee. A letter of understanding between the Health Employers Association of British Columbia, Faculties Sub-Sector, province-wide, and the British Columbia Hospital Employees Union and various construction unions, establishes a goal of eliminating all unsafe manual lifts of patients/residents through the use of mechanical equipment, except where the use of mechanical lifting equipment would

be a risk to the patients. The parties will work in partnership with the Workers' Compensation Board, the Ministry of Health and other parties to establish a financing framework to make funds available to purchase the necessary mechanical equipment.

Job Security

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board and the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario have agreed upon a provision on **job sharing**. Two teachers, both having completed a minimum of two years service with the Board and neither of them having been declared redundant, may choose to share a single teaching position for up to a maximum of five years. GO Transit, Toronto, Ontario and the Amalgamated Transit Union have negotiated a provision where should there be a **sale or transfer of bargaining unit jobs**, the employer will make reasonable effort to ensure employees laid off or terminated by the sale or transfer are offered positions with the new employer. The offers will be based on seniority. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, French Services Division, province-wide, Quebec and Moncton, New Brunswick and the Canadian Union of Public Employees have provided a letter of understanding that recommends certain rules to consider in the event that the employer decides to **outsource** part or all of its national activities such as transmitters, engineering, building management or information technology. Fletcher's Fine Foods Limited, Vancouver, and the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union have introduced a **voluntary buyout** plan to encourage voluntary attrition. If enough employees do not accept the buyout, the bargaining unit will be reduced through a mandatory buyout process in reverse order of seniority.

Training

While on approved training **during layoff**, the settlement between Prudential Steel Limited in Calgary, Alberta and the United Steelworkers of America, provides for an employee to be eligible for \$450 per week during the first two-week Employment Insurance waiting period, then \$100 per week for the rest of the training course, less the amount of any wage or remuneration earned in such week. GO Transit in Toronto, Ontario and the Amalgamated Transit Union ensures that employees on mandatory training with new equipment, software, hardware or other new devices will receive their **regular rate of pay** for the entire training period.

Labour-Management Committees

Of the 48 reports with innovative provisions, close to half (23) contained provisions for establishing joint committees. Thus, the implementation of committees is still a popular method of addressing joint concerns for new practices or addressing specific issues. The committees can consist of a wide variety of issues as shown below.

The Government of British Columbia and the British Columbia Government and Service Employee's Union have established a joint committee to examine **expedited arbitration** practices and procedures with a pilot project to develop and implement an **alternate method to resolve grievances** filed at arbitration. The Crompton Company in Elmira, Ontario and the United Steelworkers of America have incorporated a committee to review the **return to work of disabled employees** on modified work schedules while the Windsor Casino, in Windsor, Ontario and the Canadian Auto Workers are addressing all **equity issues**

including a diverse workforce, discrimination and harassment topics. Ford Electronics Manufacturing Corporation in Markham, Ontario and the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers initiated a joint committee with the employer's commitment to exercise best efforts and business contacts to attempt to find jobs for all **employees wishing to be re-employed**. The employer will fund up to \$250,000 for the committee's use. The City of Calgary and the Amalgamated Transit Union have established a unique committee to address potential areas of **union-management concerns** on operational matters, including shift scheduling, and to ensure satisfactory customer service.

A number of other agreements include a clause to discuss such issues as: recruitment and retention of employees, staffing requirements, job skills and evaluations, benefit plan review and cost containment, and safety, health and environment topics.