

SECTION 3

INNOVATIVE WORKPLACE PRACTICES

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Although fewer major collective bargaining settlements were ratified over the past few months (41 settlements), the incidence of innovative practices reported remains nonetheless commensurate with that of past ratios, that is, for slightly more than one third of the total settlements (14 of the 41 settlements).

Duration

The average contract duration of **33.9 months** for the 41 recent settlements represents a slight decrease compared to the average duration of 36.6 months for settlements reached in 1999 to date (from January to November 1999).

Nearly half of the agreements (18 of the 41 settlements) were renewed for a period of 36 months, with the remainder evenly distributed between a scheduled expiry of 24 months or less and a term of 48 months or more. Two settlements extend over a period of 72 months, namely, the renewal agreement in Nova Scotia's pulp and paper industry and Bridgestone/Firestone Canada Inc. in Quebec, while a number of school board agreements in Ontario, Manitoba and Alberta are scheduled to expire within 24 months or less.

Labour-Management Committees

While bearing in mind the reduced number of settlements reviewed (41 settlements), the trend in introducing new or innovative practices by way of a joint committee is less prevalent in these recent contracts than as was reported in the past. Only 5 of the 14 recent settlements citing an innovative practice contain a reference to these joint committees, whereas generally, this practice is referred to in approximately 50 per cent of settlements reporting a workplace innovation.

These committees will be initiating discussion on issues such as, ergonomics, labour relations training and education, teamwork and teacher workload, class size and pupil-teacher ratios.

Labour Relations

A 72-month renewal agreement between Bridgestone/Firestone Canada Inc. and the Fédération de la métallurgie was recently reached through an **interest-based bargaining** approach. This process is considered to have been beneficial to both parties involved.

Organization of Work

The single settlement reporting a new practice which affects the organization of work, provides for a **workload review** at the request of graduate teaching assistants with the University of Western Ontario, in order to ensure that assigned duties are appropriate to their work schedule.

Compensation and Working Conditions

The majority of settlements citing a workplace innovation (9 of the 14 settlements), contain initiatives dealing with compensation and working conditions. These include:

- a new **work environment** provision in two agreements with Nova Scotia teachers whereby, abusive acts by pupils against a teacher will not be tolerated. The two school boards involved have committed to responding in an expeditious, comprehensive and appropriate manner should such situations occur or when other breaches of discipline take place;

- a commitment to close the **pay equity** wage gap by July 2001, in the settlement between Newtel Communications, Newtel Mobility and the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada, Local 410, by granting additional increases to the basic hourly rates of pay on July 1, 1999, 2000 and 2001;
- a provision for **greater flexibility in leave** for **religious observance** purposes in the settlement between the Government of Canada and the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada;
- and the **recognition of same-sex partners** as contained in the Government of Canada settlement, and the renewal agreement between the District of Saanich and the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 374.

Training and Development

Seven of the 14 settlements include new initiatives related to training and development. Among these are the establishment of a **training fund**, provided as a job security measure and set at a minimum of \$250,000 per year, to assist employees of Newtel Communications and Newtel Mobility in **pursuing new career opportunities**, and a number of **professional development funds** for various school boards in Alberta and Nova Scotia.

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