

SECTION 3

INNOVATIVE WORKPLACE PRACTICES

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The following overview of workplace innovations is based on 76 collective agreements¹ ratified between January and April 2000. Of this number, 35 include provisions deemed innovative or of particular interest, many of which provide for the establishment of labour-management committees of various types.

Duration

The agreements range in duration from **12 to 108 months**, and just over one third (28 agreements) were renewed for 36 months. The six agreements between the Government of Canada and various unions are effective for 12 months due to a new job classification standard will be implemented. In Quebec, the 13 agreements in the public and parapublic sector have terms of 48 or 54 months. Of all the settlements ratified during this period, the agreement between the Université de Sherbrooke and the Syndicat des employés et employées de l'Université de Sherbrooke has the longest term, at 108 months or nine years; however, this agreement is retroactive to June 1995 and runs until May 2004. The agreement between Cuddy Food Products and the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union was renewed for 60 months and is effective until June 2005.

First-Time Agreements

Having obtained certification in June 1998, 4,600 administrative services employees of the University of Toronto, now represented by the United Steelworkers of America and grouped into two bargaining units, ratified a first-time collective agreement in

January 2000. These agreements provide for a number of improvements, including a new progressive wage scale, an enhanced pension plan and better job security.

Committees

The establishment of labour-management committees continues to be a popular way of introducing new practices or addressing specific issues. A number of agreements contain provisions for setting up various types of joint committees. One such committee is mandated to **review and update the company's strategic plan**. The parties recognize that the company's dependence on a single product makes it vulnerable and that value-added activities have to be developed to ensure that the company remains economically viable and that the employees have job security (Algoma Steel Inc. and United Steelworkers of America, Local 2251).

The agreement between the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the Syndicat des techniciens et artisans du réseau français de Radio-Canada (ind.) provides for a joint committee to **improve efficiency and productivity** with a view to reducing operating costs. The parties agree to target priority areas in order that remedial action can be taken promptly. At Cuddy Food Products, the parties agreed to set up two joint committees to develop and implement a **gain-sharing plan and a profit sharing plan**.

Two agreements provide for a committee mandated to **review hours of work** and, in one case, **workload** as well, and one agreement includes a clause on creating a joint **ergonomics** committee (Government

¹ These 76 agreements are those for which summaries are available to date; they do not represent all the agreements ratified during the review period.

of Quebec and Ambulance Services Employers and Fédération de la santé et des services sociaux, and Super Fresh Food Markets and United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, Locals 175 and 633).

The most recent negotiations in the public and parapublic sectors in Quebec resulted in a letter of agreement providing for the creation of a joint committee on **balancing work and family**. The committee is to have completed its work six months after the agreements are signed.

A number of agreements include a clause providing for a labour-management committee to discuss **prevention of workplace violence, assistance for employees and their families, or training**.

Labour Relations

The agreement between the Board of Governors of Mount Royal College and the Mount Royal Faculty Association contains new provisions to improve the bargaining process already in place. The period of direct bargaining preceding compulsory mediation is shortened. If mediation fails to produce an agreement, the parties can resume direct bargaining. Binding arbitration remains an option but is no longer a compulsory stage of the process.

Working Conditions

One agreement reached in the federal public sector with the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada introduces **one month or four weeks of vacation after only one year of service**. Many of the agreements analysed now include **same-sex spouses** in the definition of spouse for benefit and leave purposes.

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