

SECTION 3

INNOVATIVE WORKPLACE PRACTICES

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This overview of innovative practices is based on a summary of 92 collective agreements that were ratified from April to July 2000. Of these agreements, 39 contain at least one feature that is either innovative or especially interesting. In particular, 33 of the agreements provide for the setting up of one or more joint committees to deal with a range of issues.

Agreement Duration

A little more than half (48 agreements) are for 36 or 48 months (29 and 19 respectively). In the case of the 44 other agreements, the periods covered range from **12 to 72 months**. The two longest contracts of 72 months, or 6 years, are between Kruger Paper in Trois Rivières, Québec, and the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada, and between the Loblaws supermarkets and SuperCentre stores in Ontario and the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union. The former agreement was made retroactive to May 1998 and will stay in force until April 2004, while the latter runs until July 2006. Of the 5 other agreements for 5 or more years, only one is in effect until 2005 – the contract between Transport Cabano-Kingsway Inc. and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

A First Collective Agreement

Following certification in April 1997, bargaining started between the University of Ottawa and Local 2626 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees. This local represents students employed by the university as teaching and research assistants, tutors, markers, lab instructors and so on. This first agreement, for a five-year period, was ratified in May 2000 and will run until August 31, 2002. The new agreement provides for full-time union leave, paid leave to attend conferences, public and personal holidays, sick leave, parental and maternity leave, and an optional benefits package. The agreement also provides for opportunities for cost-free participation in various training workshops

as well as in one non-program course, and average annual pay increases of 2.95 per cent over the five years.

Joint Committees

There is an increasing trend in the agreements surveyed to set up joint labour-management committees.

For example, agreements signed between INCO and Locals 6200 and 6500 of the United Steelworkers of America, provide for the setting up an outsourcing steering committee **allocated to reducing the current level of outsourcing with its related costs**. In the wake of the amalgamation of cities in the Toronto area, the four new collective agreements between the City of Toronto and the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 79, contain several clauses related to establishing committees. These new committees include: a committee **to maintain municipal services** by assessing the feasibility of reassigning to unionized workers, the work that is currently contracted-out; an "ad hoc" harmonization committee, to be formed within 30 days of contract ratification responsible **for restructuring the existing job classification system** and implementing a mechanism to determine the salary levels for the modified classifications; and a labour-management committee to act as a forum **for exchanging ideas and making recommendations on various issues**.

During bargaining between the Thames Valley District School Board in London, Ontario, and the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 4222C, both sides agreed to set up a committee **to develop a fair, coherent code of practice to enable employees with disabilities**, regardless of the nature of the disability, to return to work quickly and safely. The committee is mainly responsible for identifying suitable jobs or ones that could be modified to accommodate the abilities of the workers concerned. Finally, several agreements now contain either a provision or a letter of agreement referring to setting up committees to deal

with issues such as **classification, training,** and the **assessment of benefit packages.** One of these, between the City of Winnipeg and the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 500, deals with implementing a committee **to look into introducing benefits for part-time employees.**

Labour Relations

The agreement between the Ontario Council of Teaching Hospitals and the Professional Association of Interns and Residents of Ontario, contains a **new clause dealing with the arbitration and grievance procedures.** From now on, most grievances (except for dismissals or when the parties decide otherwise) will be heard by a single arbitrator, who will, at the request of one of the parties, act as a mediator-arbitrator. In addition, a provincial committee will be formed to quickly settle grievances resulting from the new provision specifying the maximum number of nights and weekends residents would be "on call."

In other developments, John Deere Works in Welland, Ontario, and Local 275 of the Canadian Auto Workers Union **entered into early negotiations** and settled an agreement effective from October 2001 to September 2004. The newly negotiated agreement extends the company's commitment to continue operations and stay competitive and confirms the construction of an in-plant painting facility, rather than have this work contracted-out, as the company had originally intended. In Alberta, paramedics, who had been previously organized into four bargaining units, signed, for the first time, a joint agreement (Provincial Health Authorities of Alberta and the Health Sciences Association of Alberta). In British Columbia, also for the first time, support and technical services employees at 11 colleges in the province agreed to negotiate a **multi-institutional frame work agreement** dealing with matters such as pay, contracting-out, job security

and flexibility (Post-Secondary Employers' Association and the Colleges and Institutes Support Staff Bargaining Association).

Compensation and Working Conditions

Finning International's Finning division in British Columbia and the Yukon and Local 692 of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers have agreed in a letter of understanding to establish a **job retention program that is designed to mitigate the effects of fluctuating demand.** The program allows employees to accumulate a total of up to 240 hours of overtime, regular hours, annual holidays or sick leave to compensate for slack work periods or possible layoffs. This "bank" of work time can be taken in 120-hour blocks and can only be used to avoid being laid off. During these "leave" periods, the employees concerned are able to receive their normal hourly pay rate plus a 5.0 per cent bonus for each hour of leave.

The latest INCO agreement introduces a **new pay scheme based on the company's revenues** which replaces the previous bonus system that was linked to the price of nickel. For each quarter in which the company's operating profit reaches \$10 million US, the company's employees will receive a bonus of 25¢ per hour, plus a further 2.5¢ per hour for every million dollars of additional profit. This scheme should translate into higher pay for the workers, does not have an upper limit and is separate from other company's divisions.

Finally, both the agreement between the City of Calgary and the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 38 and between the Government of Manitoba and its employees' union, introduce a new provision dealing with **teleworking.** The agreement between the Waterloo Regional Police Commission and the Waterloo Regional Police Association introduces **three new personal leave provisions** concerning paternity, adoption and marriage.