

INNOVATIVE WORKPLACE PRACTICES

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This overview of workplace innovations is based on a review of 86 collective agreements that settled between August and November 2001. Of these, approximately two-thirds (53 settlements) contained provisions deemed innovative or of particular interest.

Duration

The trend towards a contract duration of 36 months continues for approximately half (47.7 per cent) of the collective agreements signed. The number of settlements of 24 months or less represents 19 settlements, while 36 months and more level represents 24 settlements of which eight are greater than 48-months duration.

Compensation

A few examples of innovative practices related to compensation provided for greater flexibility in allocation of wage adjustments. For example, the agreement between the Construction Management Bureau Limited, province-wide, Nova Scotia, and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, provides for the introduction of a **parity increase** provision. Any monetary increase given in this round of bargaining to sheet metal workers or plumbers and pipefitters shall, if it exceeds the negotiated wage adjustments received by the electrical workers, be automatically given to the workers covered by this agreement, unless such increase is negotiated in exchange specific concessions.

The agreement with MTS Communications Inc., province-wide, Manitoba, and Telecommunications Employees Association of Manitoba introduces a **variable pay** plan trial, whereby employees in salary levels 6, 7 and 8 will be eligible to participate and receive a target bonus of up to 5.0 per cent of regular wages, payable in the following year, based on financial targets set within the plan.

BC Gas Utility Ltd., province-wide, British Columbia, and Office and Professional Employees International Union have negotiated a new **Scorecard Program** which replaces the gain-sharing plan. Target payments for 2002 results will be 3.0 per cent of an employee's annual earnings, subject to attainment of satisfactory results pursuant to the Scorecard. The Canadian Pacific Railway, system-wide, and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers introduced a new **share purchase** plan whereby employees can buy Company shares through payroll deductions and the employer will cover all brokerage fees.

In the settlement between the Capital District Health Authority and the Nova Scotia Government Employees Union, there is a new **market-based adjustment** clause for demonstrated shortages in any particular classification. Also, at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, with the Faculty Association, an **anomalies and retention** fund of \$400,000 will be used for retention and market-related cases, such as, countering external offers or correcting salary inversions.

Services Minéraux Industriels inc, in St-Honoré de Chicoutimi, Quebec, and United Steelworkers of America have a distinctive **attendance premium** of \$100, every six months, for those employees with no absence from work of more than four hours.

Job Security

The settlement between Teck Cominco Ltd., Trail, British Columbia, and United Steelworkers of America, provided an **enhanced employment security** clause. The employer rescinded all layoff notifications and cancelled the planned layoffs for November 2001. If it becomes necessary to reduce employment levels in the future, the employer will attempt to do so through attrition. Also, if the employer decides to **reduce production** during the term of the agreement in order to sell power to the United States, and if this reduction has the potential to impact employment levels, the parties will meet to explore alternative solutions.

The collective agreement between the Capital District Health Authority and the Nova Scotia Government Employees Union, has introduced a clause which stipulates that there will be **no layoff or job loss** for employees with 10 years seniority or more. As well, no layoffs will occur due to contracting-out for any permanent employee regardless of seniority, unless they refuse placement to another position that pays at least 75 per cent of current salary.

The collective agreement between Laidlaw Transit Ltd., Para Transpo Branch in Ottawa, Ontario, and Amalgamated Transit Union, facilitates **part-time employees** to acquire employment security. Full-time positions shall be first offered to part-time employees according to their part-time seniority.

The settlement between Great Atlantic and Pacific Company of Canada Limited and the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, at various locations in Northern Ontario, provides that when **managers perform bargaining unit work** in contravention of the collective agreement, the employer will pay a penalty of \$100 to the Sudbury Cancer Centre (Leukemia Fund).

Training

Innovative practices relative to training generally provide for increases in the employer's contribution to employee development funds. For example, at Cargill Foods, Division of Cargill Limited in Etobicoke, Ontario, the employer has **tripled its contribution** (from \$5,000 to \$15,000) per year to the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, Local 175/633, Training and Education Fund.

The employees covered by the collective agreement between the Government of Prince Edward Island, Workers Compensation Board of Prince Edward Island and Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission and the Prince Edward Island Union of Public Sector Employees, can now benefit from a new training and development provision whereby the employer shall contribute **\$250,000 per year** to the training and development fund. Each employer will establish a committee, to which the union can appoint two representatives, to develop a training and development policy.

Abitibi-Consolidated of Canada in St-Félicien, Québec, and Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada established a provision concerning **new**

technology. The employer will help employees affected by layoffs to obtain training that will enable them to qualify for new types of work.

Working Conditions

The employees covered by the collective agreement between the Capital District Health Authority and the Nova Scotia Government Employees Union, can on April 1st of each year, receive **five additional days credited to their sick leave bank**, if they have used seven or fewer general leave days in the previous year.

Two renewal agreements have introduced **voluntary service leave** provisions. The Government of Canada and Public Service Alliance of Canada negotiated a provision of one day to work as a volunteer for a charity or community organization, or to take part in a community activity. The Government of Prince Edward Island and the Prince Edward Island Union of Public Sector Employees stated that employees who volunteer for duty as a volunteer fire fighter or with a emergency measures organization, shall be permitted to be absent from work to provide services during normal working hours.

The settlement between CAMI Automotive Inc. at Ingersoll, Ontario, and the National Automobile, Aerospace, Transportation and General Workers Union of Canada, (CAW-Canada), has introduced **tuition assistance** in the amount of \$800 per year per employee dependent enrolled in a college or university. The employees can also benefit from a **childcare supplement** provision to which the employer will contribute \$10 per day to a maximum of \$2,000 per year per child five years of age and younger.

In the collective agreement between the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations and the Canadian Union of Public Employees, various locals, the parties have agreed to introduce a **representative workforce for Aboriginal workers** provision and to facilitate educational opportunities which may include literacy training and training path counselling/planning. The parties also agree to implement educational opportunities for all employees to deal with misconceptions and dispel myths about Aboriginal people. The employer and the union will make every reasonable effort to accommodate an employee who wishes to attend or participate in a spiritual or cultural observance required by faith or culture.

Employee Benefits and Pension Plans

Several agreements include improvements to both benefit levels and scope of coverage as well as enhanced pension plan provisions. A few examples of the more innovative practices are listed below.

The employees covered by the collective agreement between Technologies Industrielles SNC Inc. at Le Gardeur, Quebec, and the United Steelworkers of America, can now benefit from a **phased retirement** plan which allows for a reduction in the hours of work one year before retirement, for a maximum of five employees at a time. Teck Cominco Metals Ltd. in Trail, British Columbia, and United Steelworkers of America reached agreement on a provision concerning **current retiree benefits**. The employer will conduct annual meetings with representatives of retirees to discuss the current pensioner's benefits plan.

The settlement between the Ontario Council of Regents for the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology, province-wide, and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union provides under vision care benefits, a maximum of \$300, every two years and for every year for persons under 18 years of age. Benefits may also be used to cover **laser surgery**.

Labour-Management Committees

Joint committees have been prevalent for a number of years with increasingly diversified and broadened mandates.

The settlement between the New Brunswick Association of Nursing Homes Inc. and the Canadian Union of Public Employees, various locals, has introduced the establishment of a committee which will **review all part-time hours** with the goal of converting such hours to full-time positions.

The establishment of a **health benefit** review committee is also provided for in the collective agreement between the Textron Automotive Company at Port Hope, Ontario, and the United Steelworkers of America. The new committee will assist employees with concerns about claims for health benefits.

Previous Innovative Workplace Practices

For PDF documents of previously published innovative workplace practices from past issues of the *Workplace Gazette*, visit the Labour Program's Workplace Information Directorate Web site at <http://labour.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca>