

Innovative Workplace Practices

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

This overview of workplace innovations is based on a review of 95 collective agreement settlements negotiated during the second quarter of 2004. Of these, slightly less than one half (44 settlements) contained provisions considered to be innovative or of particular interest.

Duration

Of the 95 settlements reviewed during the quarter, over 50 per cent (53 collective agreements) had a duration of 36 months. Four settlements had durations of 12 months. Thirteen settlements had durations of between 15 and 24 months while 16 had durations of exactly 48 months. Nine settlements had durations of 54 months or more. The two longest durations of 72 months each were with Canadian Forest Products Ltd., various locations in British Columbia, and Industrial Wood and Allied Workers of Canada and Marché St-Joseph, Montréal, Quebec and United Food and Commercial Workers International Union.

Compensation

Two collective agreement settlements in the forest industry have negotiated **profit-sharing** plans. The plan between Canadian Forest Products Ltd., various locations in British Columbia and Industrial Wood and Allied Workers of Canada is based on the industry's return on capital investment and will provide annual lump-sum payments of \$500 with respect to years two, four, five, and six of the collective agreement and \$1,000 in year three. The other plan with Forest Industrial Relations Limited, various locations in British Columbia, is to be established and also based on the industry's return on

capital. Should the parties not agree on an appropriate formula by September 30, 2004, the issue will be referred to the Mediation-Arbitration Commissioner for a binding determination. The final plan will be modeled on the profit-sharing plan negotiated for the 2003–2009 Southern Interior Master Agreement and adapted to the specific circumstances of the Forest Industrial Relations Limited companies.

In order to address **recruitment and retention** issues, the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology, Regina and other centres in Saskatchewan, and Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union have agreed to implement new pay grids over a five-year period commencing July 1, 2003. Differences in salaries paid to instructors in the lower salary ranges will be substantially eliminated and salaries for the higher levels will be increased through additional education allowances.

Ontario Power Generation Inc., Nuclear and Non-nuclear, province-wide, Ontario, and Society of Energy Professionals will introduce a **skills and competencies performance pay** plan on January 1, 2005. The minimum performance payouts will be 1.0 per cent of base payroll for the year 2004.

A new **team incentive** plan has been established between La-Z-Boy Canada Limited, Waterloo, Ontario, and Communication Workers of America. The employees will be given the opportunity to create and work in manufacturing teams. For the purpose of team initiation, employees will be paid incentive earnings at Grade 5 base rate, but are

guaranteed 150 per cent of base rate or their average rate, whichever is lower, while participating in the training/trial period. Following this period, the base rate will be set at 125 per cent for the first two months and will decrease by 5.0 per cent for the next three months until the base rate reaches 110 per cent.

The Community Social Services Employers' Association, province-wide, British Columbia, and Community Social Services Bargaining Association of Unions continue a **job evaluation** plan. Effective March 31, 2005, one-time lump-sum payment in lieu of retroactivity will be distributed from a fund of \$1,500,000 to those employees who were waiting for the outcome of job evaluation reconsideration appeals for the period October 1, 2002 to March 31, 2004. Also, the sum of \$6,100,000 will be applied to selected wage rates effective March 1, 2006 in accordance with the terms of the renewed job evaluation plan. The parties have also negotiated a new **two-tier wage structure**. For employees hired after March 31, 2004, wage rates will be set at 85 per cent of the 2001 job evaluation plan wage structure for the first 2,000 hours, 90 per cent for the next 2,000 hours, 95 per cent for the next 2,000 hours and 100 per cent after 6,100 hours.

A **long-service wage increment** has been initiated between Calgary Laboratory Services (CLS), Calgary, Alberta, and Health Sciences Association of Alberta. Effective April 1, 2004, long-service increments equivalent to 3.5 per cent of the current top steps will be added as an eighth step of the salary schedule for certain classifications. To qualify for the increment, employees must have seven years' service at the previous top step of their classification.

Bonuses

Marché St-Joseph, Montréal, Quebec, and United Food and Commercial Workers International Union have a **Christmas bonus** providing 2.0 per

cent of wages earned between November 15 of the current year and November 15 of the preceding year. Maple Leaf Pork, Burlington, Ontario, and United Food of Commercial Workers International Union have an **attendance bonus** which pays employees 75 cents per hour for perfect attendance.

Working Conditions

Alternative work shift flexibility arrangements have been introduced by Forest Industrial Relations Limited, various locations in British Columbia. As per an arbitration report, the employer may implement additional shift arrangements as follows:

- a) two crews working four days, 10 hours per shift;
- b) three crews working Monday to Saturday, 10 hours per shift, not to exceed 40 hours per week; and,
- c) four crews working continuous seven-day operations scheduled to work shifts other than a) and b).

The employer stipulates that alternate shift schedules will not be introduced where the intention is to increase the use of casual employees in place of regular employees. Also, where the employer does not provide 72 hours' notice of a change to an employee's work schedule, the employee will be paid time and one half for the first shift on the new schedule.

Marché St-Joseph, Montréal, Quebec and United Food and Commercial Workers International Union have initiated a pre-retirement provision for a **reduced workweek**. Employees with a minimum of 50 years of age and 10 or more years of service can work a reduced work schedule of four days per week for a period of six months or more. The employer will limit the number of eligible employees based on operational plans. The employee must give a minimum notice of three weeks to the employer to adhere to, modify or cancel a reduced workweek agreement.

A new **retiree health and welfare benefit** plan has been negotiated between Sherritt International Corporation, Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada. The parties will research options that would allow retired employees an opportunity to purchase benefits at a lower market rate versus individual premium rates. The benefits would include drug prescription, vision, dental and medical practitioner plans. The employer will implement the plan within 18 months after ratification of the collective agreement.

Job Security

New provisions have been negotiated dealing with **accommodating employees returning to work after a disability**. Westfair Foods Ltd., province-wide Manitoba and United Food and Commercial Workers International Union recognize their **joint responsibility** in this regard by agreeing that returning employee's job duties may be modified and/or that the employee may be assigned to a different work assignment where reasonably practicable. If an employee can only be accommodated in a lower paid classification, the employer will attempt to find a position that minimizes the effect on rates of pay.

Vancouver and District Labour Council, Vancouver British Columbia, and Office and Professional Employees International Union negotiated a provision which states that an employee, who resumes employment following a long-term disability leave, will be **reinstated to the position previously occupied** or to a comparable position, provided there are no medical limitations.

A **return to work program** has been established between College Compensation and Appointments Council, province-wide, Ontario, and Ontario Public Service Employees Union. Every college will have a policy to support injured and ill employees in returning to work and will contain the following:

- a statement of commitment that describes how the program will operate, which may contain a permanent or ad hoc committee;

- strategies that support the statement and form a framework within which individual cases are managed;
- a description of roles and responsibilities for the various stakeholders involved in the process;
- a process that outlines the steps to be followed in managing individual cases, including a mediation component;
- a dispute resolution process;
- a communications and training component; and,
- a process for regular reviews of the program.

Windsor Casino Limited, Windsor, Ontario, and CAW-Canada have negotiated a provisions whereby employees who are **laid off due to technological change** and who do not displace a junior employee, are entitled to a payment of \$1,000 per year of service upon resignation. An employee who does not wish to accept this payment may remain on layoff and be eligible for a training allowance of up to \$2,000 per year to a maximum of \$4,000 during the first two years of layoff. If the employee does not accept either of the above options, they will be eligible for training on any vacancy unfilled following the posting process that exists at the time the employee is laid off.

A **plant closure** clause introduced between Ontario Power Generation Inc., Nuclear and Non-Nuclear, province-wide, Ontario, and Society of Energy Professionals states that the basic and service based search notice of 24 weeks will be converted to cash and the employee will cease employment if no work is available. The employee will have recall rights for the duration of the notice period. In the event of a **mill or logging camp closure**, Forest Industrial Relations Limited, various locations in British Columbia, and Industrial Wood and Allied Workers of Canada have a severance package which provides the employee with a lump-sum payment equal to 10 days pay per year of continuous service.

Training/Education

Nortel Networks, Montréal, Quebec, and Canadian Union of Communications Workers have established a **training and education** provision. The employer will reimburse the registration and training fees and books for Class Three positions. The training courses will be made available either inside or outside of the normal working hours at education institutes.

A **retraining fund** continues between Université Laval, Québec, Quebec, and Fédération nationale des enseignantes et enseignants du Québec. The employer contributes an annual amount equivalent to the salaries of 50 lecturers with a priority to upgrading lecturers and to collective projects initiated by the employer. An **education fund** has been negotiated by Health Authorities of Prince Edward Island, province-wide, and International Union of Operating Engineers. An amount equivalent to \$65,000 will be provided on April 1, 2003, and 2004, and \$75,000 on April 1, 2005.

Labour-Management Committees

During the second quarter of 2004, 15 of the 44 agreements with innovative practices contained provisions for establishing committees dealing with a wide variety of issues.

The Health Authorities of Prince Edward Island, province-wide, and International Union of Operating Engineers have established a **pensionable service** committee. The parties have agreed to refer the matter of "deemed services" to the committee for consideration, including the matter of an employee's ability to move to permanent part-time employment within the last few years of their career while continuing the earn full-time pension credits.

A **workplace issues** committee has been initiated between Windsor Casino Limited, Windsor, Ontario, and CAW-Canada. The joint representatives will meet at regular intervals to discuss suggestions, problems, methods of improving morale, and other similar subjects and concerns including gaming issues, and both regulated and unregulated changes in the industry.

Other committees included in collective agreements deal with such items as classification evaluations, training, and retiree health and welfare benefits.

Innovative Workplace Practices

Previously published innovative workplace practices from past issues of the Workplace Gazette, are available on the Workplace Information Directorate Web site at

<http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/lp/wid/info.shtml>