

## **"KAROSHI!"**

### **Reduce stress, workload and work time and improve work-life balance before it's too late**

#### **Introduction**

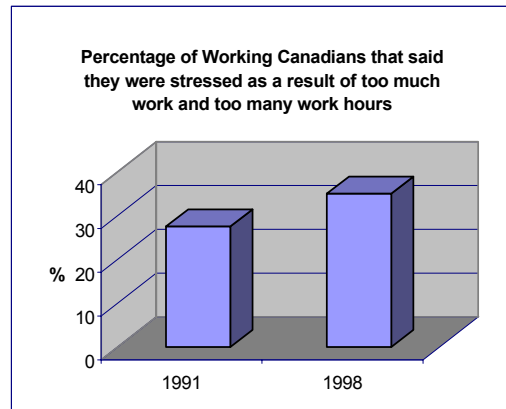
For over fifteen years, employers have put tremendous pressure on us to work more quickly or put in longer hours, with fewer resources and less staff. This pressure, which stems from work organisation based on Japanese models, is such that Canadian workers are now more stressed out, overworked and tired. They can no longer perform their work within normal working hours and have difficulty balancing work and life responsibilities. This growing pressure is unhealthy. In fact, Japan is presently dealing with the « Karoshi » phenomenon, an increase in the number of workers stricken with heart disease in the prime of their lives, as a result of this heightened pressure and excessive working hours.

Our research and discussion paper explores stress, work overload, working hours and work/life balance and proposes measures to deal with these issues before it is too late. The purpose of this paper is to provide some background on the present situation in Canada and within the federal public sector to fuel discussion on the path to take for the future. Our submission is divided into four parts, the first providing a definition of workplace stress. The next three parts outline the situation concerning workload, working hours and work/life balance. We also present some proposals for addressing each of these issues and conclude with a summary which will hopefully stimulate debate.

## I. Stress<sup>i</sup>

### The Issue

Our workplaces are evolving constantly. Technological change, program reviews, budget cuts and layoffs are only some of the components of that transformation. One of the main consequences of current workplace developments is an increase in work-related stress. In Statistics Canada's 1998 General Social Survey, 35% of Canadian workers said they were stressed as a result of too much work and too many work hours, compared to 27.5% in 1991.



### What is stress? Can "workplace stress" be defined?

We hear a lot about stress, but what is it? Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary defines stress as:

**“the result produced when a structure, system or organism is acted upon by forces that disrupt equilibrium or produce strain.”**

In simpler terms, stress is the result of any emotional, physical, social, economic or other factors that require a response for change.

Some stress is normal, and a certain level of stress is acceptable. That often provides us with the energy and motivation to meet our daily challenges both at home and in the workplace. This kind of "positive" stress helps us rise to a challenge and meet goals such as deadlines or production targets. However, when stress hits with a force we cannot control, physical and mental changes occur that can affect our quality of life and our health. These are signs of "negative stress".

"Negative workplace stress" is the harmful physical and emotional responses that can happen when there is a conflict between job demands and the amount of control we have to meet those demands. As stated by the Canadian Mental Health Association:

***“Fear of job redundancy, layoffs due to an uncertain economy, increased demands for overtime due to staff cutbacks act as negative stressors. Employees who start to feel "pressured to perform" can get caught in a downward spiral of increasing effort to meet rising expectations with no increase in job satisfaction”.***

The relentless requirement to work at optimum performance levels takes its toll in job dissatisfaction, employee turnover, reduced efficiency, illness and even death. Absenteeism, illness, alcoholism, "petty internal politics", bad or snap decisions, indifference and apathy, lack of motivation and creativity are all by-products of an over-stressed workplace.<sup>ii</sup>

**What are the causes of stress in the workplace?**

In the workplace, stress may be the result of any number of situations. Some examples include:

<b>Some causes of stress in the workplace</b>	
<b>Factors unique to the job</b>	<b>Workload</b> (overload and underload) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• pace / variety / meaningfulness of work</li></ul> <b>Hours of work</b> (not enough or too many) <b>Autonomy</b> (the ability to make your own decisions about your own job or about specific tasks) <b>Physical environment</b> (noise, air quality, etc.) <b>Isolation in the workplace</b> (emotional or working alone)
<b>Role in the organization</b>	<b>Role conflict</b> (conflicting job demands, multiple supervisors/managers) <b>Role ambiguity</b> (lack of clarity about responsibilities, expectations, etc.) <b>Level of responsibility</b>
<b>Career development</b>	<b>Under-/over-promotion</b> <b>Job insecurity</b> <b>Career development opportunities</b> <b>Overall job satisfaction</b>
<b>Relationships at work (interpersonal)</b>	<b>Supervisors, co-workers, subordinates</b> <b>Threats of violence, harassment, etc.</b> (threats to personal safety)
<b>Organizational structure/climate</b>	<b>Participation</b> (or non-participation) in decision-making <b>Management style</b> <b>Communication patterns</b>

(Adapted from L.R. Murphy, "Occupational Stress Management: Current Status and Future Direction", in Trends in Organizational Behavior, 1995, Vol. 2., pp 1-14.)

In addition to work-related stress factors, there are other stress factors arising from, for example, the need to care for elderly persons and provide high-quality care for children. What is more, with the aging of the population and an increase in the number of single-parent families, more and more Canadians find themselves alone in taking care of children and sick or aging parents, which accentuates the stress those workers feel.

**Who is most affected by workplace stress?**

Stress is high in our workplaces. It affects all workers, but more particularly white collar workers. Stress levels are very high among professionals and managers, since respectively 49% and 48% of workers in those groups report that they are stressed, according to Statistics Canada data for 1998.<sup>iii</sup> Stress is also up among education, health and social services workers: more than 40% of Statistics Canada survey respondents working in those sectors said they were stressed. In government, stress levels remain high, with 35% of workers feeling stressed. In addition, in a healthy workplace survey published by the Canadian Labour and Business Centre, 54% of managers and 84% of union officers said they believed that stress had increased at the end of twentieth century.

## What can we do?

The causes of workplace stress vary greatly, as do strategies for reducing and preventing it. Each of the causes shown in Table 1 can be addressed by strategies and action plans designed to combat it. Where stress in the workplace is caused, for example, by a physical agent, it is best to control that agent at its source. If the workplace is too loud, control measures to attenuate noise should be implemented wherever possible. If you are experiencing pain from repetitive strain, work stations can be redesigned to reduce repetitive and strenuous movements.

We believe that a partial solution to negative workplace stress is to ensure better control of workload and work time. Better management of workload and work time can help us manage tensions in the workplace and off the job. A workplace where we feel in control of our workload and have the flexibility to organize our schedules and a workplace that facilitates work-life balance will help to reduce the stress from work and work-life conflicts.

In this paper entitled "*KAROSHI*", we discuss the issues of workload, work time and work-life balance. In the next three parts, we present the main issues and some statistics on the current state of affairs and discuss orientations for coping with this health threat, particularly in a collective bargaining context.

## II. Work Overload

### **The Issue**

For some years now, workload, and more particularly work overload, have become a permanent cause for concern among Canadian workers. Technological change, budget cuts, work reorganizations and staff work force adjustments have forced workers to do more with fewer resources. They are now required to work harder, often to the point where they can no longer do their work during normal business hours.

As we all know, work overload has many consequences. In particular, it increases stress, occupational disease risks and absenteeism and lowers productivity. All these problems must be brought under control if we want to improve working and living conditions.

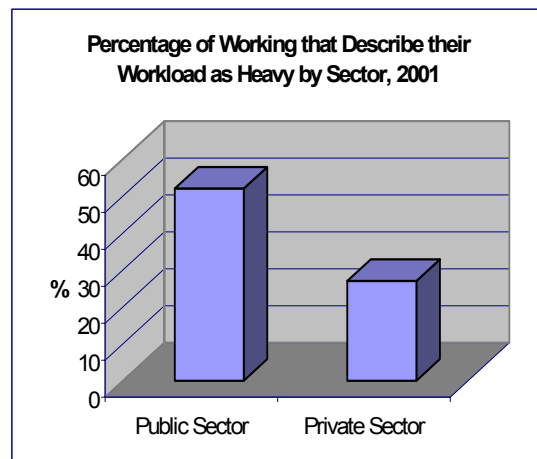
### **Excessive workload: a concern in Canada?**

In a survey conducted by EKOS Research Associates in January 2001<sup>iv</sup> involving 1,213 Canadian workers, 36% of respondents said that their workload was heavy. Work overload is perceived as a very serious problem among public sector workers:

- 52% of public sector workers described their workload as heavy, compared to only 27% of private sector workers.

In addition, according to the survey, many workers perceived their workload not only as being heavy, but as having increased in recent years.

- In all, more than four out of 10 workers (43%) said they felt their workload had increased between 1999 and 2001.
- In the public sector, the figure is nearly six out of 10 workers (56%).



Excessive workload is thus a serious and growing problem.

### **To what can increased workload be attributed?**

Again according to the 2001 EKOS survey data:

- 72% of workers at various levels of government reported that increased responsibilities and added duties had contributed to the increase in their workloads;
- 61% also said that greater use of technology was a factor in their increased workload;
- greater demand for service and faster production were factors in increased

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workload for 60% of workers in the various levels of government;

organization had contributed to an increased in workload;

- 56% of workers in various levels of government stated that changes in work

- 54% of workers in various levels of government reported that staff cuts (layoffs and downsizing) had helped increase workload.

### **And work overload in the federal public service?**

Work overload was by far the most significant problem revealed by the Public Service Employee Survey conducted in 1999:

- nearly one employee in two (49%) responded to the 1999 survey said that his/her workload was not reasonable;
- of all respondents, 50% reported that the quality of their work had suffered because of the requirement to do the same or more work with fewer resources.

The findings of the 2002 Public Service Employee Survey confirmed that work overload was still a serious problem:

- of the 95,000 respondents, nearly nine out of 20 workers (43%) said they could only sometimes or rarely perform their duties during normal working hours, compared to eight out of 20 workers (40%) in 1999.

The quality of their work had suffered as a result of work overload:

- in the same survey, 42% of respondents reported that the quality of their work had suffered as a result of the fact that had to do the same work or more with fewer resources.

Lastly, one of the reasons for work overload was thought to be poor distribution of workload among workers:

- according to the Public Service Employee Survey, one worker in five (20%) completely or partly disagreed that their immediate supervisor distributed work fairly.

### **And among PSAC members?**

The same situation exists among federal public servants who are members of PSAC:

- of 2002 federal Public Service Employee Survey respondents, 60%, or 57,000 respondents, were represented by PSAC; of that number, 41% said they could only sometimes or rarely perform their duties during their normal hours of work;
- a total of 41% reported that the quality of their work had suffered as a result of the fact that they had to do the same work or more with fewer resources;
- and 21% of respondents completely or partly disagreed that their immediate supervisor distributed the work fairly.

**What should be done to reduce work overload?**

Work distribution, which directly influences workload, was and is still the right and exclusive responsibility of the employer. It is the employer who decides who does what, when, where and how. It is also the employer who is generally responsible for work overload.

There are a number of strategies and response options for preventing work overload. The first is to improve workload distribution, and the second to review priorities in order to provide relief to workers. Lastly, it is possible to increase resources. However, since distributing the workload, establishing priorities and hiring new resources are exclusive responsibilities of the employer, we should instead ask ourselves: how can we acquire more control over the workload?

**How can we acquire more control over the workload?**

One way to improve our control over the workload and thus prevent and counter work overload is to address the employer's right to assign the workload. We could include in our collective agreements an obligation for the employer to distribute the work fairly. For example, an obligation could be added for the employer to exercise its rights and responsibilities in a reasonable and fair (or equitable) manner and in good faith, without discrimination or harassment. By making these changes, we would then have a form of recourse, in particular through the grievance process, if the employer did not distribute the workload fairly by alleging that it was not exercising its rights in a fair and equitable manner.

Another possible form of intervention to gain greater control over the workload would be to require consultation among workers, their union and managers. An obligation could be added to our collective agreement for the employer to consult workers and their unions periodically on the distribution of tasks and workload.

In the federal public service, that could first take the form of a union-management initiative for the public service as a whole, with an exclusive mandate to develop and introduce tools for more effective distribution of tasks and workload management, including training, in order to better equip the workplace to handle work overload. This initiative could also be introduced in conjunction with union-management workload management consultation committees in each workplace where the employer, workers and their unions periodically discuss the distribution of tasks and workload.

This obligation to consult workers and their unions is already provided for in our collective agreements. For example, the employer must consult the union where it wishes to proceed with a work reorganization in the context of the introduction of technological change, where it wishes to adjust its work force or reorganize work schedules. Consultation thus already occurs on the question of adjusting working hours and/or the number of workers. However, the employer does not yet have an obligation to consult the union and workers regarding the distribution of

duties and/or the quantity of work performed by workers.

Adding personnel is of course the other solution to work overload. However, to increase the work force, it is often essential to clearly demonstrate needs in order to justify the addition. It is hard to justify adding personnel where we do not have all the facts. In that context, increasing the number of forums for improving workload distribution, reducing work overload and making urgent resource needs known could help. Introducing a consultation process on workload distribution in our workplaces, as suggested above, can help to make managers at all levels

aware of the additional need for personnel in each workplace.

Lastly, there are other alternatives and forms of intervention, as viable as collective bargaining, which can be used to reduce or prevent work overload. Knowing the consequences of work overload on workers' stress levels, health and safety, improving and using occupational health and safety legislation and occupational health and safety committees can assist in raising awareness of the problem and introducing solutions that will provide relief for workers and prevent occupational disease.

### **III. Work Time**

#### **The Issue**

The time we devote to work directly influences the time we have for other activities. The more we work, the less time we have to be with our families and friends, to rest, consume, do volunteer work, play sports, study, read or do any other activity.

For some years now, this time has become increasingly scarce for an increasingly large part of the population. For example, as a result of the increase in the number of single-parent families, more and more Canadian workers must shoulder family responsibilities alone. Others must care not only for their children, but also for ailing or elderly parents. In addition, a larger number of Canadians now work more overtime, often without pay, leaving fewer hours for other activities.

In a perfect system, every individual could decide how much time to allocate to work and other activities. But the situation is far from perfect. We rarely choose the number of hours we work. The profession or job we have and the place where we work often dictate the number of hours we perform. In addition, many do not even have the opportunity to organize their work time so as to have more flexibility to strike a balance between their work and other activities.

#### **Hours worked in Canada**

According to the 2001 annual data from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey (LFS):

- Canadians usually work an average of 37.3 hours a week; that figure is the average number of hours worked by all workers in all jobs, since one worker may have more than one job;
- with respect to the principal employment, it was observed that all Canadian workers, including part-time workers, spend an average of 36.6 hours a week working;
- the average number of hours of work in the principal job of full-time workers was nevertheless 41 hours a week, including overtime.

#### **Who works the most hours per week?**

On average, men work (paid work) more hours than women (39.8 compared to 33.0). Workers 25 to 54 years of age also work more hours than young people (15 to 24) or older workers 55 and over. Self-employed workers, on average, work more hours than employees.

The average number of hours worked in the principal employment also varies by industry and occupation. It is more than 45 hours a week in agriculture, forestry, mining and oil extraction and less than 33 hours a week in the accommodation and restaurant industries and in teaching. The average number of hours is also greater than 42 hours

per week for managers, contractors, foremen and primary sector occupations (agriculture, fishing, forestry and mining) and less than 33 hours a week for a number of occupations related to sales and service and in the arts, culture, sports and recreation.

**And hours of work in government?**

As for government in Canada, that is to say governments in all jurisdictions, the average number of hours worked per week was 36.5 in 2001, 0.1 hour less than the average for the Canadian economy as a whole. Men worked an average of 37.9 hours and women 34.9 hours a week. Full-time workers in Canadian public administration work an average of 38.1 hours a week.

- The average number of hours worked by federal government workers, that is to say all workers in the federal public administration, including national defence, and not only federal employees under the Treasury Board's responsibility, was 37.1 in 2001, an average of 30 minutes more a week than in the economy as a whole.
  - The average number of hours of work per week was 36.4 for provincial and territorial government employees and
- 35.9 for the employees of municipal, local, regional and aboriginal administrations.
- Full-time federal government workers worked an average 38.3 hours a week, compared to 37.3 hours for full-time provincial and territorial government workers.

In other words, federal government employees work more hours on average than those of other administrations.

**Background to the reduction of work hours in Canada**

The reduction in the number of work hours has been one of the main battles waged by the union movement. Early in the twentieth century, the typical work week was 60 hours. In the following decades, pressure exerted by the unions, which campaigned for a shorter normal work week, in particular for health and safety reasons, helped to reduce the average number of hours of work, thus enabling workers to have more time to spend with their family and friends and for recreation.

**The work week thus became shorter throughout the first part of the twentieth century and stabilized between 35 and 40 hours in the mid-1960s.**

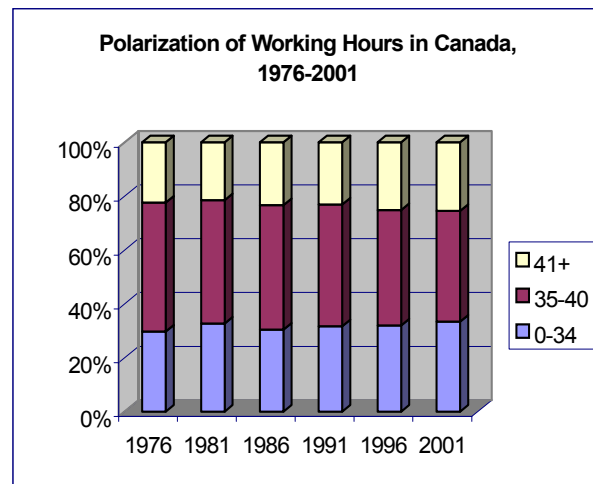
The situation has not changed much since the mid-1960s. The average number of hours per week usually worked in Canada declined from 38.6 in 1976 to 36.6 in 2001.<sup>v</sup> The average number of hours full-time employees usually work in their principal employment fell from 41.9 to 41.0 hours per week from 1976 to 2001.

## Polarization of working hours

The stabilization of the average number of hours worked per week over the past 30 years conceals another phenomenon, the shortening of the normal work week. This phenomenon, also known as the polarization of working hours, has become particularly apparent since the recession in the early 1980s and consists in a reduction in the relative number of individuals who work a normal work week (35 to 40 hours a week) together with a simultaneous increase in the percentage of persons who work few hours (less than 35 hours a week) and people working long hours (more than 40 hours a week).

It may be observed from the number of hours actually worked in Canada that:

- nearly one worker in two (47.9%) worked between 35 and 40 hours a week in 1976, a figure that fell to slightly more than four out of 10 workers (41.2%) in 2001;
- on the other hand, the percentage of Canadian workers working less than 35 hours a week rose from 29.7% in 1976 to 33.4% in 2001;
- in addition, the percentage of Canadian workers performing more than 40 hours a week increased from 22.4% to 25.4% between 1976 and 2001.



### **And in the federal and other governments in Canada?**

In governments in Canada:

- 55.0% of employees worked between 35 and 40 hours a week in 1987; the figure fell to 52.7% in 2001;
- on the other hand, the percentage of workers in all governments in Canada working fewer than 30 hours a week rose from 14.8% to 16.5% between 1987 and 2001;
- and the percentage of government workers working more than 40 hours a week increased from 13.6% to 18.4% between 1987 and 2001;
- lastly, 6.5% of workers in Canadian governments worked more than 50 hours a week in 2001, compared to 5.0% in 1976.

## Part-time work in the federal government

Part-time employment is much less prevalent in the federal and other governments than in the economy in general.

- In 2001, 18.1% of the Canadian labour force spent less than 30 hours a week at work, and 7.5% of the labour force of governments in Canada worked part-time, compared to 5.6% for

the federal government. Lastly, according to the data of the Public Service Employee Survey, which only covers employees under the responsibility of the Treasury Board, 4% of respondents worked fewer than 30 hours a week in 1999 and 2002.

## Overtime in the federal government

However, many government workers work overtime.

- According to LFS data, 23.3% of government workers across the country worked overtime in 2001, compared to 20.5% for the Canadian economy as a whole.
- Workers in the various public administrations worked an average of 1.9 overtime hours per week per worker, compared to 1.8 hours per week per worker for the Canadian economy as a whole.

All workers who work overtime should normally be compensated in the form of pay or compensatory leave. However, the actual situation is quite different from what the practice should be. In fact, more than half of employees who work overtime are not compensated. This phenomenon is more pronounced in government than in the economy as a whole:

- 57.7% of workers who work overtime in the governments in this country are not compensated, compared to 52.2% in the Canadian economy as a whole.

It should be noted that the average number of overtime hours paid is greater in the public administrations than in the economy as a whole:

- government workers who worked overtime received an average of nine paid overtime hours per week compared to only 8.3 hours for the economy as a whole.

The phenomena of overtime and unpaid overtime also affect employees under the federal Treasury Board's responsibility:

- according to the 2002 Public Service Employee Survey, 23% of federal employees said they felt compelled by others to work overtime;
- nearly nine out of 20 workers (43%) said they only sometimes or rarely managed to perform their duties during their normal working hours;
- lastly, 30% of federal employees said that, in 2001-2002, they had rarely or sometimes been compensated (in cash or compensatory leave) for overtime worked.

In short, Canadian workers usually worked an average of 36.6 hours a week in 2001. The average number of working hours for government workers was 36.5. Federal government workers worked more hours on average than the employees of other governments, 37.1 hours, half an hour more per week than the Canadian average and more than an hour more than the employees of municipal, local, regional and aboriginal governments.

The phenomenon of overtime, and especially unpaid overtime, affects government employees more particularly. In the federal public service, nearly one-third of workers said that they were only sometimes or rarely compensated for overtime worked in 2001-2002.

## What can we do?

### 1. Shorten the normal work week

Shortening the normal work week and increasing workers' leisure time are among the main objectives of the union movement as a whole and of the Alliance in collective bargaining. The Alliance has made a commitment in one of its policies to obtain a reduction in the number of working hours without a corresponding reduction in net compensation, for a four-day work week of up to 32 hours. Current data on the normal work week appear to show some disparity between the average number of hours usually worked per week in the federal public service and in other administrations.

### 2. Expand the definition of full-time employee

For some, reducing the number of working hours means increasing job insecurity. All too often workers are forced to occupy part-time positions because no other jobs are available. In addition, in many of our workplaces, working fewer hours than the normal number for a full-time worker, that is to say approximately 37.5 hours a week, often means losing certain benefits. For example, vacation may be weighted on the basis of the number of hours of work performed.

In addition to shortening the normal work week without reducing compensation, we could increase benefits for workers who would like to work fewer hours per week than the number usually required for full-time employment. For example, we could require employers to provide full compensation to employees working

32 hours a week instead of the 37.5 hours currently required.

### 3. Fight the scourge of overtime

The other scourge in our workplaces is overtime. The reasons why employers resort to overtime and why employees work overtime are numerous. We are not unaware that workers often need overtime to increase their incomes, which have stagnated for a number of years now. In addition, workers can only rarely refuse to work overtime.

The right to refuse to do overtime complicates matters for employers, but it also leads them to consider another option: hiring new employees. However, the cost of the premium offered to workers who work overtime (1.5 or 2 times the hourly wage) is often less than the cost to recruit, train and pay benefits to new employees. Consequently, overtime pay offered to workers could be increased, for example, from 1.5 times to 2 or 3 times the regular wage. However, there is a risk that this will aggravate another, equally significant scourge: unpaid overtime. Another solution often suggested is to place an upper limit on overtime per employee, per employee class, per department or for an organization. Do you have any other suggestions?

### 4. Combat unpaid overtime

There are also many reasons why workers work overtime without pay, that is to say work for free. Some do it to increase their chances of getting a promotion, while others simply cannot discharge their workload during normal working hours and/or feel compelled by

others to work overtime. It is not clear what solutions can be implemented to fight unpaid overtime. In a society in which even children are encouraged to take work home at night, we must show some originality if we want to attenuate this phenomenon.

Amending our collective agreements is not necessarily the way to fight unpaid overtime. Instead, we should change the organizational culture. Through an education campaign to inform members of their rights in this area and an

information campaign to force the employer to acknowledge this scourge, a joint action plan to accurately measure the extent and causes of the phenomenon and, lastly, the joint (union-management) implementation of practical solutions to fight it, we will thus be able to target our actions more accurately.

Potential options may vary considerably and may include better training, better workload distribution, priority review or simply hiring more personnel.

## **IV. Structure work time to improve work-life balance**

### **The Issue**

As we all know, work is increasingly stressful. Economic and social changes also make it more and more difficult to strike a balance between work and other obligations. Thirty or 40 years ago, the salary of a single person working full-time could support an entire family. Today, more than one salary is necessary to improve one's standard of living. In addition, there are now more and more single-parent families and workers who must shoulder family responsibilities on their own. Lastly, since the population is aging, many workers are also forced to take care of sick or elderly parents.

Conflicts between work and life in general abound. As shown in a number of studies by Linda Duxbury et al., not only can family conflict with work, such as when a worker must take care of a sick child, work also conflicts with the rest of life, particularly when a worker takes work home or works overtime without pay. And the cost to employees, employers and society is significant.

The 2002 Public Service Employee Survey examined the work-life balance issue relatively thoroughly by adding a number of questions on problems relating to workload and the balance between occupational and personal obligations. The findings were decisive: further improvements are necessary.

Although 87% of employees said they were satisfied with their current work arrangements (e.g. regular hours, telework, compressed work week) (Q8):

- 23% said they felt pressured by others to work more than their regular hours;
- 17% said they could rarely or never complete their assigned workload during regular working hours;
- 26% said they could complete their work only sometimes;
- only slightly more than two-thirds said they could often or always balance their personal, family and work needs in their current jobs;
- slightly over a quarter of employees said that their career progress had been moderately or significantly affected by conflict between work and family or personal obligations.

### **What can we do?**

In addition to shortening the normal work week for all workers and attacking the problem of unpaid overtime (see Part III), one of the solutions to conflict between work and family life is to permit a voluntary reduction in the number of working hours per week. Under this option, a number of workers would voluntarily choose to occupy a part-time job or share a position in order to have more time for other obligations. The other strategy is to reduce the number of working hours during the year. In this way, the amount of leave for family events could be increased. Lastly, leave occurring at specific times in life may also help improve work-life balance. An example of this would be leave with full pay to take care of a sick parent, spouse or child.

**What policies promote better work-life balance?**

The following support measures were available for employees under the responsibility of the Treasury Board as of April 1, 2000 and may have an impact on the balance between work and private life:

- maternity leave,
- parental leave,
- maternity-related reassignment or leave,
- time off for medical appointments for pregnant employees,
- leave without pay for the care and nurture of pre-school-aged children (up to five years),
- leave without pay for the long-term care of a parent (up to five years),
- leave with pay for family-related responsibilities (five days),
- marriage leave (five days),
- personal needs leave without pay (two periods: three months and, once during a career, one year),
- career-development leave with pay (short term to enhance career),
- educational leave (up to one year) with the possibility of an allowance in lieu of salary of up to 100%,
- leave with income-averaging (periods of between five weeks and three months off, with employees continuing to receive a reduced salary averaged over 12 months),
- self-funded leave (up to one year portion of present salary deferred for future funded leave),
- pre-retirement transition leave (up to two days a week during the two years before retirement),
- leave without pay for relocation of spouse and a priority entitlement to reappointment at the new location.

In addition, some workplaces have access to on-site day care centres, a day care service fund, eldercare information and referral services and/or an employee assistance program.

Lastly, one final option is to increase and restructure work time to provide more workers with more work schedule flexibility so that they can meet their personal obligations. The Treasury Board's workplaces already have flexible working arrangements including:

- job-sharing,
- flexible hours of work,
- variable work week,
- telework.

**Who makes use of flexible working arrangements? And among PSAC members?**

However, a minority of workers under the Treasury Board's responsibility and workers represented by PSAC make use of these arrangements:

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- 19% of Treasury Board employees and 21% of those represented by PSAC have a shortened work week;
- 33% and 32% say they have a variable work schedule offering, for example, variable arrival and departure times;
- 5% and 4% telework;
- 2% share jobs;
- 3% of respondents and 4% of workers represented by PSAC have opted for leave with income averaging.

We must continue our struggle in the next few years and extend leave and increase the flexibility of work schedules so that they meet the needs of workers who must increasingly take care of other persons. A number of changes can be made in the context of the collective agreement. The existence of clauses permitting greater flexibility in work schedules shows this. We must also continue working to improve those clauses and access to them. Lastly, education and training work must also continue so that our members are aware of the existence of those clauses and take maximum advantage of them.

## Conclusion

In the past few decades, we have witnessed profound social, economic and organizational changes. The considerable increase in the number of women in the labour market, the aging of the population, the increase in the number of single-parent families, technological change, globalization, budget cuts, restructuring of the work force, in particular the proliferation of non-standard forms of employment (such as temporary employment), overtime and work force adjustment are only some of the transformations that have had and continue to have an influence on the lives of Canadians.

All these changes have many consequences for workers. The increased presence of women in the labour market, the aging of the population and the rise in the number of single-parent families have put greater pressure on workers taking care of children and/or elderly or sick persons. Budget cuts, work force adjustments, the increase in overtime and the proliferation of non-standard forms of employment enhance stress, workload, economic insecurity and employee fatigue and exacerbate conflicts between the demands of work and those of family and life in general.

A number of the transformations described above often have the same consequences in the workplace: they considerably increase workload and overtime. Budget cuts and work force adjustments require workers to do more with fewer resources, to pick up the pace to the point where many of them can no longer perform their duties during normal working hours. Economic insecurity and the pressure of a more

competitive workplace also require certain workers to work overtime, often without pay.

We know that increased workload and working hours have many harmful consequences for workers, their co-workers and the workplace in general. These factors increase stress and fatigue, which may lead to heightened tension among workers, an increase in occupational disease (such as burnout), greater absenteeism and lower productivity.

Part of the cure for all these ills is undoubtedly better control over workload and work time. Better management of workload and work time can help us manage tensions in and outside the workplace. Better management of workload and work time can have a positive impact on stress in the workplace, absenteeism, occupational disease and productivity and help us strike a better balance between work and family and personal responsibilities.

The objective of all stakeholders in the workplaces should be a healthy, safe workplace, free of negative stress, offering a balance between occupational and personal responsibilities. The purpose of this paper was to provide a profile of the present situation regarding workload, work time and work life balance in the Canadian labour market and in the federal public service in order to fuel discussion on the path to take for the future.

We defined workplace stress and presented the factors that contribute to it. Then we outlined the situation regarding workload, work time and

work-life balance in the Canadian economy as a whole and in the federal public service. Proposals for addressing each of those issues were also developed.

This paper was designed as an accessible tool for introducing and discussing the issues of stress, workload, work time and work-life

balance. It does not provide a complete picture of the literature and research in those fields or outline the full range of existing policies, practices and measures for addressing these problems.

*It is our hope that it will stimulate thought and debate as a basis for future action.*

***We hope that this information is useful. For any comments or suggestions, please communicate with Kate Rogers or Sylvain Schetagne - negotiations section of PSAC in Ottawa.***

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<sup>i</sup> This section draws to a large extent on information provided on workplace stress at the Web site of the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS).

<sup>ii</sup> Canadian Mental Health Association, "*Sources of Workplace Stress*", Richmond, British Columbia.

<sup>iii</sup> 1998 General Social Survey, Statistics Canada.

<sup>iv</sup> EKOS Research Associates, Survey on Canadians' attitudes regarding their workload, for CUPE, February 7, 2001.

<sup>v</sup> This corresponds to the average number of hours usually worked in the principal employment by all Canadian workers, including self-employed and part-time workers.