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Work and Family Issues: Beyond 'Swapping the Mopping and Sharing the Caring'

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* Nancy Riche, Executive Vice-President of the Canadian Labour Congress used the phrase 'swapping the mopping and sharing the caring' in the address she gave at the Ontario Women's Directorate's conference, Work and Family: the Crucial Balance, Toronto, May 6, 1991.

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Executive Summary

During the past two decades, there has been a significant transformation in the Canadian economy, labour force and in the social and familial context in which labour force participation decisions are made. An increase in the labour force participation of women, particularly married women and those with children, together with a rising number of both single-parent as well as dual-earner families in the labour force are focusing greater attention on work and family issues. Despite the changes in the labour force and family structure, a dichotomous relationship between work and family still exists creating serious conflicts for employees and employers and raising concerns for unions and policymakers.

Workers often feel stress and encounter difficulties trying to meet their responsibilities as family members and as employees. Employees report that family demands have affected their job performance and advancement opportunities and they are concerned with the low level of support and understanding among management as well as the lack of flexibility and family-support programs and policies in organizations. Juggling the competing and often conflicting needs of work and family has underscored the longstanding issue of affordable, adequate and accessible childcare and the new and emerging area of eldercare. Better childcare support, family-related paid and unpaid leave, flexible working arrangements and personal counselling or employee assistance programs are some of the measures that employees feel would be effective in helping resolve work and family conflicts.

Employee difficulties in meeting work and family obligations and fulfilling the job requirements may also translate into absenteeism problems, higher turnover costs and losses in productivity for employers in addition to the recruiting, hiring and training costs associated with replacing workers who quit for family reasons. Refusals to be promoted or relocated can also impair organizational effectiveness. Employers, in attempting to become more responsive to changing business conditions and cope with a fiercely competitive global environment, are seeking flexibility, improved productivity and cost-effectiveness in their operations. At the same time, human resource approaches are changing within organizations with respect to how work is organized and managed and to better meet the difficult challenge of recruiting, motivating and retaining employees. The slowdown in labour force growth, an ageing workforce and a relative shortage of younger workers are providing additional constraints on the recruitment, motivation and retention of a capable and productive workforce. To this end, employers are showing a growing self-interest in work and family issues and are becoming aware that progressive and flexible family policies which reduce the conflict between work and family obligations can be used to compete for workers, attract and retain talented people and reap the benefits of a motivated, committed and productive workforce.

Organized labour has also been focusing greater attention on work and family issues as part of its traditional objectives of maintaining and increasing membership levels, providing better services to members, and negotiating better wages, benefits, working conditions and income and job security. To assist workers in balancing work and family obligations, unions have stepped up their bargaining demands for collective agreement provisions relating to family care and benefits including maternity, parental and adoption leave, childcare in the workplace, employee assistance programs, etc. The labour movement's concern with work and family issues also extends beyond their bargaining agendas. In addition to adopting policy statements and documents and passing resolutions at their conventions and making changes in their own operations, unions have formed coalitions with groups outside the labour movement and engaged in legislative and political lobbying.

Government policies have supported families through anti-discrimination provisions in federal and provincial human rights legislation, maternity protection and adoption provisions in federal and provincial employment standards legislation, and maternity and adoption benefits under the Unemployment Insurance Act. More recently, amendments to the Unemployment Insurance Act and to employment standards legislation in several jurisdictions have extended these provisions to recognize the joint responsibility of both parents for family members and to help 'workers balance their work and family lives in a way that encourages the retention and commitment of our ... human resources in a competitive labour market' (Ontario Ministry of Labour 1989).

Given their mutual needs and concerns, there is a window of opportunity for a partnership between employers, employees, unions and governments to address the new dynamics of the workplace and the family and enable men and women to contribute more fully both on the job and at home.

Introduction

In the 1990s, work and family issues are emerging as an important priority for employees, management, labour and government. Pressure is building for appropriate strategies, policies and practices that recognize and effectively respond to the changing dynamics and growing interdependence between work and family obligations.

This paper examines the work and family issue from the following perspectives:

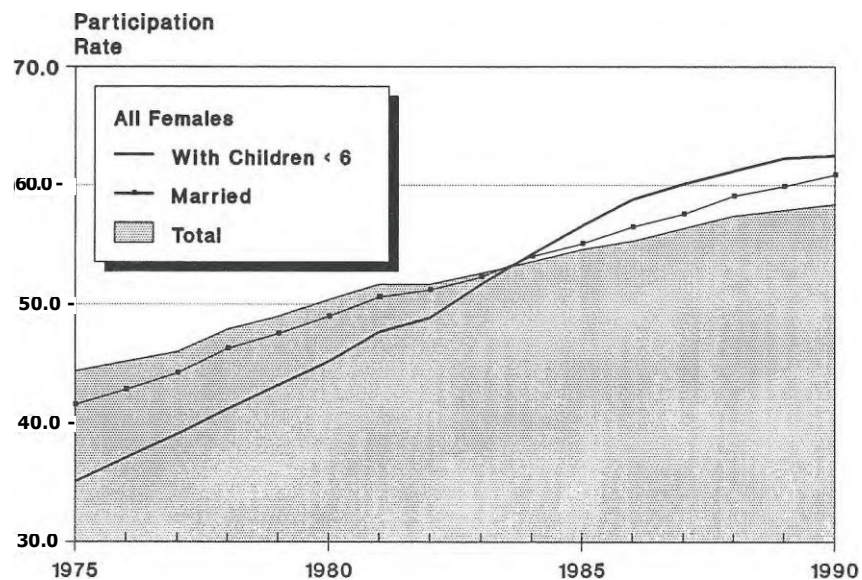
- ❑ the forces of change underlying the increased importance of the issue and the evolving work and family relationship;
- ❑ the concerns of employees, including their views on the types of support needed to reconcile work and family conflicts;
- ❑ employer approaches, their concerns, the prevalence of programs and policies and their perceived effectiveness;
- ❑ the response of unions, including provisions in collective agreements and union policies and programs;
- ❑ government initiatives, including recent changes in unemployment insurance and employment standards legislation.

The Forces of Change

A number of social, demographic and economic forces operating over the past twenty years have had important impacts on the family and the workplace in terms of where work is done, how it is done and who does it.

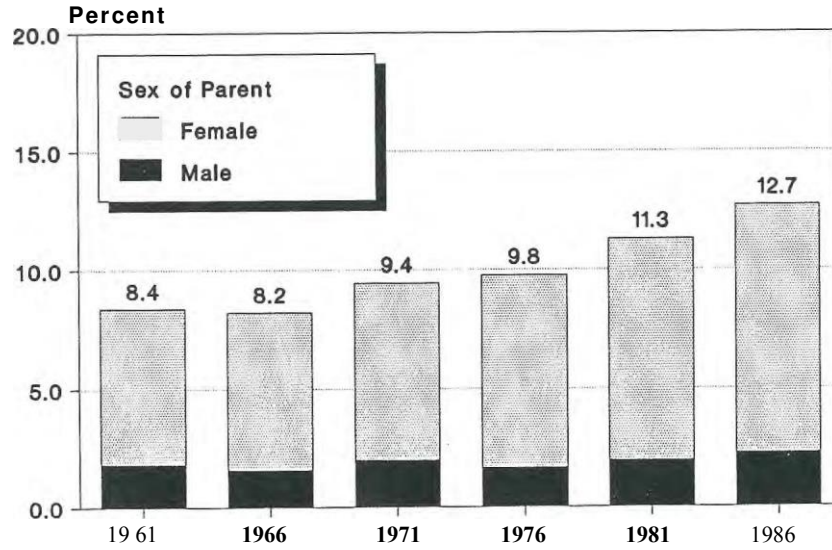
- ❑ The majority of women, traditionally considered to have the primary responsibility for unpaid housework and family care, are now either working or looking for work (Chart 1).
- ❑ There has been a marked increase in the number of common-law partnerships, blended families and in the prevalence of one-parent families (Chart 2).
- ❑ Most families in Canada are now dual-earner families, that is, both the husband and wife work, a clear departure from the one-earner family which traditionally dominated the workforce (Chart 3).

CHART 1: Trends in Female Labour Force Participation, Canada, 1975-1990



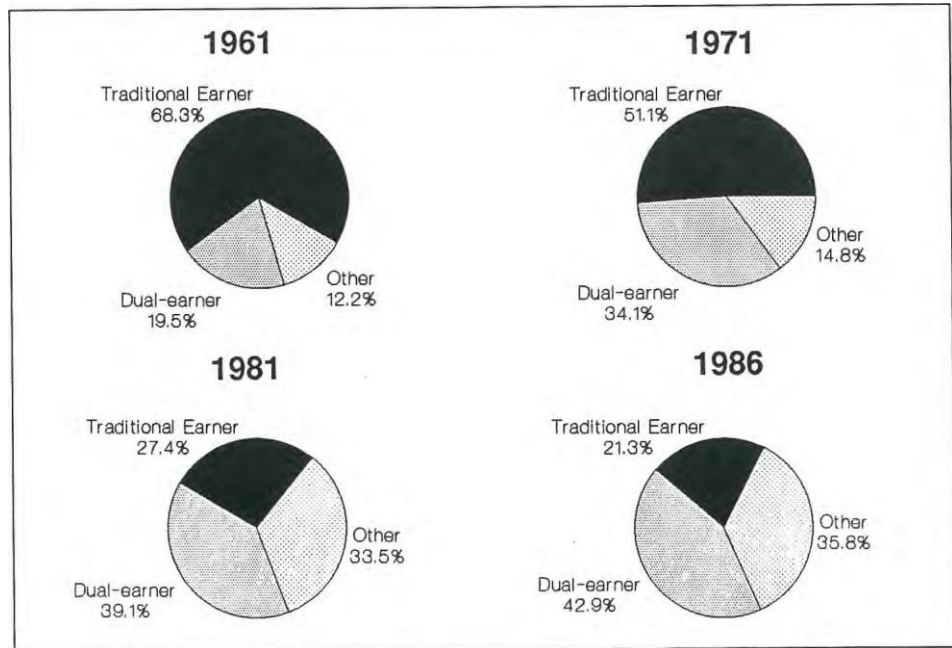
Source: Kumar, Arrowsmith and Coates forthcoming and data from various government publications.

CHART 2: Single-Parent Families
 Percent Distribution of All Census Families, Canada, 1961-1986



Source: Bali (1990), Appendix Table 52.

CHART 3: Traditional- and Dual-Earner Families Percent Distribution of All Husband-Wife Families, Canada, 1961-1986



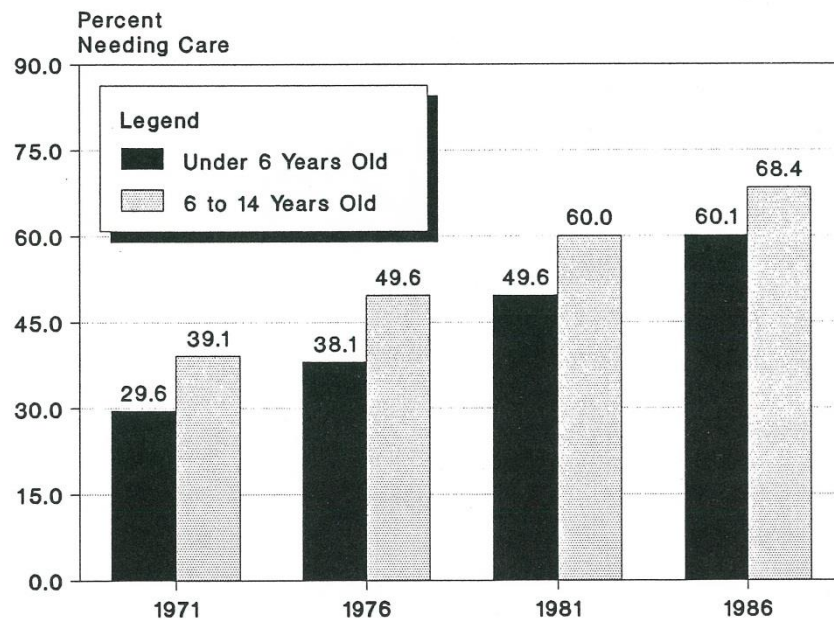
Source: Statistics Canada census data.

The phenomenal increase in the proportion of families with no stay-at-home parent has also underscored the longstanding and critical issue of adequate, affordable and accessible childcare. As indicated in Chart 4, there has been a steady increase in the number of children needing care. Recent available data suggests that about 50 percent of those not using formalized childcare would do so if provided the opportunity (Health and Welfare Canada 1990). The following table relates parental work situations to the percentage of full-time daycare spaces available for the various ages of children. According to one study,

if the present trends in family structure and female labour force participation continue, Canada is likely to face an increased demand for extra-familial care — in spite of a low fertility rate. (Ram 1990, 39)

Furthermore, an ageing population has focused attention on a new area of concern the care of elderly parents or relatives. Employees who are required to care for elderly dependents while also ministering to the needs of children — the so-called 'sandwich' generation — face even tougher balancing acts to meet the competing, often conflicting needs of work and family. A recent Conference Board of Canada survey revealed that among the respondents, over four-fifths (87 percent) of persons requiring their assistance were elderly, usually parents. In contrast, only about four percent reported that those requiring care were children. It has been estimated that 30 percent of employees over the age of 30 have eldercare responsibilities (Taerk no date).

CHART 4: Estimates of Children Needing Care Percent of All Children, Canada, 1971-1986



Source: Bali (1990), Appendix Table 4.2.

Number of Day Care Age Children of Parents in the Labour Market in Relation to Full-time Day Care Spaces

<i>Category of Parent</i>	<i>Number of Children</i>	<i>% of Children Served</i>
Infants (0-17 Months)¹		
Mothers in labour force	307,063	5.43
Full-time working parents	159,382	10.45
Full-time working parents plus students	168,465	9.89
Full-time working parents plus students, plus parents working 20 to 29 hours a week	212,191	7.85
Toddlers (18-35 Months)²		
Mothers in labour force	316,277	9.65
Full-time working parents	158,933	19.2
Full-time working parents plus students	172,437	17.7
Full-time working parents plus students, plus parents working 20 to 29 hours a week	221,693	13.76
Pre-schoolers (3-5 Years)³		
Mothers in labour force	641,893	27.7
Full-time working parents	327,056	54.34
Full-time working parents plus students	353,522	50.28
Full-time working parents plus students, plus parents working 20 to 29 hours a week	453,839	39.16
School-age Children (6-12 Years)⁴		
Mothers in labour force	1,720,310	5.56
Full-time working parents	1,001,851	9.55
Full-time working parents plus students	1,065,941	8.98
Full-time working parents plus students, plus parents working 20 to 29 hours a week	1,305,170	7.33

Source: Health and Welfare Canada (1990).

1 As of March 1990, there were 16,661 full-time day care spaces for children 0-17 months of age.

2 As of March 1990, there were 30,514 full-time day care spaces for children between the ages of 18 months and 36 months.

3 As of March 1990, there were 177,736 day care spaces for children between the ages of 3 and 6 years.

4 As of March 1990, there were 95,713 day care spaces for school-age children.

The Work and Family Relationship

Despite the profound changes that have taken place in the traditional workforce and in family structure,

the concept of the separability of family and work has not changed; nor has the belief that women's innate and primary responsibility, even when engaged in work outside the home, is for the home. The structure and requirements of work are still based on the assumption that the worker — male or female — has no home responsibilities, or, that if he[/she] has, they must somehow be left outside the shop or office door. It is this tradition-loaded concept that is now the challenge to management, labor and government. (Cook 1987, 424)

A dichotomous relationship between work and family has created serious conflicts between the employee role and family responsibilities.

This ideology of work and family separation and individual responsibility means that work-family conflict is strongly felt as individual conflict. Inability to handle work and family responsibilities is viewed as an individual failure, not as a societal problem. This discourages connecting individual work-family issues to broader structural issues or to values that create or magnify the conflict. (Dowd 1989, 99)

According to a survey, two-thirds of workers experience at least some difficulty in balancing responsibilities at work and at home and about one-fifth find balancing work and family 'difficult' or 'very difficult' (MacBride-King 1990a). Women experience greater degrees of difficulty than men, married, separated, divorced and widowed persons felt more difficulty than single persons (although almost one-half of single persons feel some degree of difficulty), and persons with children, particularly younger children, or other dependents to care for experience more difficulty than those without dependents. These difficulties translate into employee stress. An overwhelming majority (79.2 percent) of workers experience some degree of stress or anxiety as a result of having to balance work and family demands and more than one in four indicated experiencing 'a lot' or 'a moderate degree' of stress. Once again, gender, marital status, and dependent care responsibilities influenced the degree of stress that employees experience.¹

The traditional separation of the work and family spheres of activity and the conflict and stress that arises are also strongly related to the sexual division of labour within households. Women tend to bear a disproportionate share of household tasks and family responsibilities. According to the survey by the Conference Board of Canada:

¹ These are some of the findings from a survey conducted by the Conference Board of Canada. It should be noted that one-half of the respondents had relatively high status in their organizations. For lower income workers, immigrants, Native persons, the disabled and visible minorities, the conflict and stresses may be even more severe.

- ❑ women reported spending an average of 16.5 hours per week on 'home maintenance' compared to 9.8 hours by men;
- ❑ three-quarters of the women reported that they had the majority of responsibility for making childcare arrangements compared to 4.1 percent of men;
- ❑ women were almost four times more likely than men to report that they stayed home when their children were ill, and
- ❑ women spent about 25.3 hours a month providing care to other family relatives, primarily elderly parents, compared to 18.7 hours by men (MacBride-King 1990a).

In this respect, work-family issues have tended to be viewed as 'women's issues.' However,

[i]f we limit the issue of work and family to women, we adopt and accept the existing gendered structure of work and family. We see it as only requiring discussion of the role of women in the structure, rather than as an opportunity to question the structure itself ... it is essential that we recognize this fundamental paradox about work and family: that the structure of work and family, and the nature of the conflict between work and family, is not just a women's issue and a gender issue. We must constantly take women and gender into account because they are inseparable from the existing structure and assumptions of family and work ... At the same time, however, we must get beyond gender, to redefining the relationship between work and family.² (Dowd 1989, 80-81)

With men beginning to share more in family responsibilities, either through choice, or necessity in their role as a single parent in the paid workforce, family issues and conflicts are being viewed in a broader context and treated as whole worker issues and not just women's issues. Furthermore, the entire concept of 'family' has expanded from the stereotypical perception of family as a heterosexual married couple with children, to common-law relationships to single parent families, and to same gender families.³

The difficulties and stress that individuals experience in balancing work and family obligations spill over into the home and into the workplace. As discussed in a paper by the Canada Employment and Immigration Advisory Council (1987), time pressures, financial burdens and 'role overload' can be a frequent cause of increased alcohol and drug abuse and withdrawal of responsibilities toward a spouse. These in turn can contribute to an increase in the divorce rate which places financial burdens (and therefore added stress) on the estranged partners, loss of energy, or 'burn out' and, a decline in the birth rate. Concerns are also expressed about the vulnerability of children to the lack of 'quality

² The author goes on to point out that 'there is also a strategic problem with labelling work-family conflict a women's issue. By identifying this as a sex discrimination/women's issue, it will fall to the bottom of political priorities and social consciousness. In short, it will be devalued, minimized, privatized, it will become invisible (Dowd 1989, 81).

³ The concept of family was explored in recent decisions by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (Mossop v. Department of Secretary of State et al, 89 CLLC 17,010) and the Federal Court of Appeal (Attorney General (Can.) v. Mossop 90 CLLC 16,180).

time' spent with working parents, to being left alone after school hours (often referred to as latch-key' children) and to the shortage of quality affordable childcare. Additional worry and cost are also borne by workers with dependents who have disabilities which can affect mental and physical health. In an address to participants at a conference on work and family issues, one speaker stated that both men and women who are trying to balance work and family demands feel emotional and physical stress and a sense of being 'out of control' — they feel pushed, pulled and trapped, with no options available and a strong sense of guilt about why they cannot cope.⁴

At the same time, home responsibilities impinge on work. One-third of employees believe that their family care responsibilities have affected their advancement opportunities (MacBride-King 1990a). Women were twice as likely to feel this and they were more likely than men to state that their spouses' work had interfered with their career or job advancement. Among the reasons given by those who felt some impaired job or career growth because of dependent care responsibilities were the inability to:

- relocate or transfer when required (without considerable difficulty);
- spend extra time at work;
- take job-related courses;
- undertake job-related travel;
- accept extra projects/responsibilities;
- attend scheduled after-hours meetings or events;
- concentrate fully on work while there;
- work desired schedule or shift;
- accomplish miscellaneous tasks.

Employees often express frustration with the lack of understanding and support among supervisors and managers which may exacerbate work and family conflicts. The Conference Board of Canada's survey found a significant proportion (41.7 percent) believed that employers view employees who use family-related benefits and programs less favorably than those who do not. This may be particularly true of men who are often reluctant to use flexible work arrangements or unpaid parental leaves either due to 'cultural stigmas' and a lack of 'social support' or, because they tend to earn more than women, the higher costs associated with leaving the workforce (Banks 1990 and Deutschman 1991). Moreover, upper-level managers were more inclined than individuals in the other occupational categories to report that their spouses did not work outside the home. As a result of this full-time home support, 'many of these managers have not had to deal with the scheduling or coordinating difficulties that those in dual-earner families must contend with on a daily basis' (MacBride-King 1990a, 39).

⁴ Paraphrased from an address given at the Ontario Women's Directorate conference on Work and Family: The Crucial Balance by Debbi Gordon, Family Services of Metropolitan Toronto, Employee Assistance Division, Toronto, May 6, 1991.

The conflict and stress experienced by employees with dependent care responsibilities cause them problems in fulfilling job requirements and this impacts on employers. For example, the majority of respondents (between 52 and 57 percent) in the Conference Board survey stated that they experienced problems relocating or transferring when required, working overtime or long hours, taking on extra projects or responsibilities or attending after-hours meetings or events (MacBride-King 1990a).

Similarly, difficulties in meeting work and family obligations may also mean workers are less productive, absent more often and more likely to quit. According to the Conference Board of Canada survey, 12 percent of employees left past employers because of family considerations and 14 percent had considered leaving their current employers for these reasons. Women were four times more likely than men to have left a former employer. The survey report indicated that employer costs of turnover include loss in productivity of the qualified employee as well as recruiting, hiring and training costs for a new employee.

In addition, refusals to be promoted or relocated also can impair organizational effectiveness. About 17 percent of individuals who had been offered a promotion in the past reported that they had refused for family reasons; two-thirds of these refused to accept promotions while with their current employer. Almost one-quarter of the employees who had been asked to relocate had refused. The report also pointed out that several respondents had indicated that they do not apply for promotions or positions that may involve transfers because of family needs (MacBride-King 1990a).

Absenteeism also affects the productivity and efficiency of the organization and is costly. The Conference Board survey found that a majority of respondents (59.2 percent) had missed at least one full day of work during the six months before the survey and 39.1 percent had missed at least one full day for family reasons. Similarly, those who experienced difficulties and stress in balancing work and family demands had higher overall rates of absenteeism.

The growing interdependence between work life and family life together with a broader context in which work and family issues are beginning to be considered calls for a different perspective by employers, employees, unions, and governments as well as a restructuring of the workplace. As an early study pointed out:

Each of the three domains, work, family and society, constitutes a unique sphere of operations, each with its own social, cultural and economic realities ... To focus on family roles and responsibilities without taking into account the influence of the workplace or of social norms would be to misunderstand the dynamics of families. Likewise the spillover from families into the workplace impacts organizational productivity. The theory of separate worlds of work and family is clearly inadequate for explaining the patterns of interaction which exist between families and workplaces. It is even more deficient as a basis for developing effective programs and policies to support family responsibilities and minimize employees' role strain. (Burden and Googins 1987, 4)

What Do Employees Want?

In general, aspects of the work-family conflict which appear to cause employees the greatest concern are the lack of time and inability to control scheduling, the competing and often conflicting roles they play in fulfilling the obligations of work and family, and finding accessible, affordable quality childcare. This conflict can be further aggravated if there is no support in the home for sharing the burden of family responsibilities or if the role of the family in the workplace is marginalized with a corporate culture that is not understanding or supportive. Almost one-third of employees have indicated that employers do not 'do enough' on work-family issues (MacBride-King 1990a). About one-quarter of the respondents did not know the level of employer support. Although 65 percent of employees believed that family care issues are primarily an individual responsibility, about two-thirds felt that their employers had either the greatest or second degree of responsibility in solving family care problems; over one-half felt that governments had this responsibility and one-fifth felt that their unions had a role to play in work and family issues.

Employees felt that the following types of employer support (in order of prevalence of response) would be effective in helping workers with family care responsibilities:

- childcare support (including on-site centres and subsidies for childcare);
- personal or family-related leave (including paid and unpaid leave);
- flexible working hours;
- employer empathy, understanding, non-discrimination;
- improved current wages/benefits;
- job-sharing arrangements;
- compressed work weeks;
- work-at-home arrangements;
- part-time work with prorated benefits;
- personal counselling to employees or employee assistance programs;
- equity in benefits — extend benefits to all employees;
- paternity leave (including paid and unpaid leave);
- paid maternity leave;
- extended maternity leave;
- improved communications to employees regarding the benefit entitlements;
- improved and/or extended medical/dental coverage;
- information and referral programs for childcare or eldercare;
- eldercare support (including on-site centres and subsidies for eldercare);
- adoption leave;
- time off for overtime worked (MacBride-King 1990a).

What are Employers Doing?

Given the growing impact of work and family issues on business, employers are becoming more responsive to the interdependence between work and family relationships.⁵ However, the responses of organizations tend to be slow, incremental, on an ad hoc individual basis and often with no fundamental change in attitude and a less than proactive approach to the mutual needs of both employers and employees in the area of work-family conflicts. Therefore, employer responses have generally not kept pace with the dramatic changes that have occurred in the labour market.

Employer concerns in implementing family-responsive benefits and programs tend to focus on several key areas of concern. Since employee benefit costs absorb 34 percent of gross annual payroll (Courchene 1989, 43), employers are extremely cautious about the impact expanded or additional benefits will have on the organizations bottom line. However, in a report by the Conference Board, major employers stated that

the impact of various programs on the bottom-line issues of productivity, absenteeism, retention and recruitment levels ... resulted in benefits to the company. Most reported their perception that their programs had played a positive role in recruiting, retaining and motivating employees; reducing turnover and absenteeism; improving employee relations; improving the organizations public image; reducing employee stress; increasing employee morale and well-being; and improving the overall quality of working life. (MacBride-King 1990b)

Organizations often need to consider the replacement costs of experienced managers and professionals who 'bail-out' when home-career conflicts prove overwhelming (Rosen et al 1989). A recent US study from Cornell University found that providing unpaid leave to employees for childbirth, adoption, or a serious family illness is less expensive than replacing a worker who is forced to resign (Bureau of National Affairs 1991).

Employers are also concerned with equity issues, for example, in providing benefits and programs such as childcare to employees with families and not to employees without families. However, the Conference Board report found that, overall, the programs symbolized company commitment to all employees and that flexible benefit plans could minimize any inequities.⁶ Moreover, employers often come head-to-head with work and family issues when implementing employment equity.

⁵ A Conference Board of Canada survey noted that employers estimated that at least one-quarter of the human resource problems, particularly with respect to absenteeism, tardiness, stress, productivity and quality of performance, were due to work and family conflicts (Paris 1989).

⁶ As one practitioner has pointed out, 'family-related programs are a form of insurance designed to support individuals with particular circumstances. In the same way that not all individuals benefit from medical insurance, for example, not all individuals will receive the benefits of all family-related programs (Potter 1989, 30). Currently, only 4 percent of employers offer flexible benefits programs (The Wyatt Company 1990). However, 85 percent of companies expect that use of flexible benefits will increase by the year 2000 (Benefits by the year 2000' 1989).

For example, family conflicts emerge as one of the factors related to the underrepresentation of women in senior positions, or why organizations have difficulty in attracting and retaining women in certain professions.⁷

The Conference Board of Canada conducted a national survey of Canadian organizations to determine the prevalence of family-supportive benefits, programs and policies (Paris 1989). The findings indicated that although some of the employers, mostly larger organizations and public sector companies are providing some form of support for workers with family obligations, the majority are not. Some of the reasons given by employers for not providing family-related benefits included: some had never considered these types of benefits, some had not heard of the need for these benefits from their employees,⁸ some employers believed that they should not be involved in providing these types of benefits, and some cited the costs associated with implementation. However, employers did feel that they have a greater role to play than either governments or unions in finding solutions to work and family conflicts.

As shown in Chart 5, employers have a variety of programs for workers with family responsibilities including alternative work arrangements, leave provisions, and childcare and eldercare assistance.⁹ Although a significant proportion of employers offered leave provisions, including leave for family responsibilities and alternative work arrangements, childcare and eldercare benefits and benefits for the care of disabled relatives were not prevalent in Canada. Another report stated that there are indications that this low level of support structures may be changing. Following a survey of Canadian private and public sector organizations, the Hudson Institute of Canada and Towers and Perrin found that 11 percent of the survey group are planning to introduce a daycare centre, another 11 percent are planning a childcare information and referral system, nine percent were planning an eldercare information and referral service and five percent, eldercare counselling (Hudson Institute of Canada 1991).

⁷ For example, Rosen et al. (1989, 484) point out that investments in programs and policies that help women manage career and family pressure will pay long-term dividends with respect to attraction, retention and career commitment.

⁸ The survey found that although a significant proportion of employers had surveyed employees regarding their satisfaction with existing policies, practices, benefit preferences, only 2 percent had surveyed their employees' personal responsibilities.

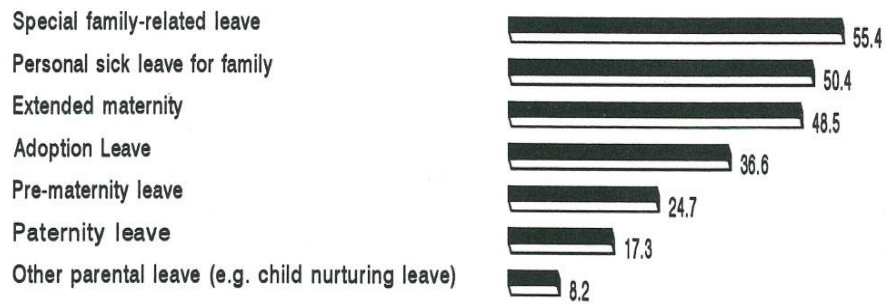
⁹ Brief case studies of organizations with on-site childcare (Ontario Hydro — Toronto, the Royal Columbian Hospital — Vancouver, Canadian National Railways — Montreal, the Calgary Herald — Calgary, and Northwoodcare Incorporated — Halifax), childcare and eldercare information services (Manulife Financial — Toronto) and alternative working arrangements (British Columbia Hydro and Imperial Oil) are presented in (MacBride-King 1990b). Initiatives developed by several organizations are also profiled in (Ontario Women's Directorate 1991).

CHART 5: Selected Programs Offered by Employers for Workers With Family Responsibilities

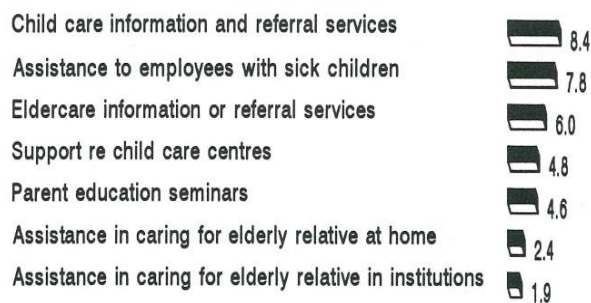
Alternative Working Arrangements



Leave Provisions



Childcare and Eldercare Assistance



Note: Percentages based on a survey response from approximately 385 organizations.

Source: MacBride-King (1990b), Table 2.

In terms of the effectiveness of family-supportive benefits, policies and practices on absenteeism, stress, poor productivity and employee recruitment and retention, alternative work arrangements were found to be the most effective in alleviating all these human resource problems, particularly employee absenteeism. Childcare benefits were helpful in reducing absenteeism, and in the area of employee retention, and recruitment while childcare centres, childcare information and referral services and programs offering care for sick children were effective in retaining employees; the latter program was also effective in reducing absenteeism. Employers who provided support for childcare centres also found a positive effect on employee morale and productivity. Parental and family-related leaves, employee assistance programs were helpful in retaining employees as well as alleviating stress and improving morale. Relocation assistance helped with the recruitment and retention of employees.

As a recent report summarized:

The extent to which family-related supports are introduced into the Canadian workplace will depend on three main factors. First, employee needs will have to be better articulated and understood by employers. Second, employers will address the impact of family-related problems in the workplace when they are clearly reflected in poor productivity, absenteeism, higher turnover, and difficulties with recruitment. Finally, employers will become more interested in looking at family-related benefits as a potential solution for human resource problems if they are convinced that this is a cost-effective way to enhance competitiveness (Paris 1989, 37).

What are Unions Doing?

In the past, organized labour has not placed a high priority on negotiating provisions specifically related to family responsibilities.¹⁰ For example, in a survey of trade unions on family responsibility leave, it was found that

although many respondents supported the concept of family responsibility leave, the issue has not had a high priority ... for those unions which have had to concentrate their efforts on job security. Some unions with a predominantly male membership felt the issue of family responsibility leave was not relevant to them. (Labour Canada 1988, 21)

One union also pointed out that,

the dearth of family responsibility leave provisions in ... collective agreements should not be interpreted as a lack of interest by our members. Certainly many of our members and their families would benefit from such provisions. The current lack of family leave can be attributed in large part to the difficult economic climate in which collective bargaining now takes place. Although our union has not often taken concessions, our members are hard pressed to do more than preserve what they previously gained. In this context, local bargaining committees naturally rank issues such as job security, contracting out, and pensions ahead of family leave in setting their priorities. (Labour Canada 1988, 23)

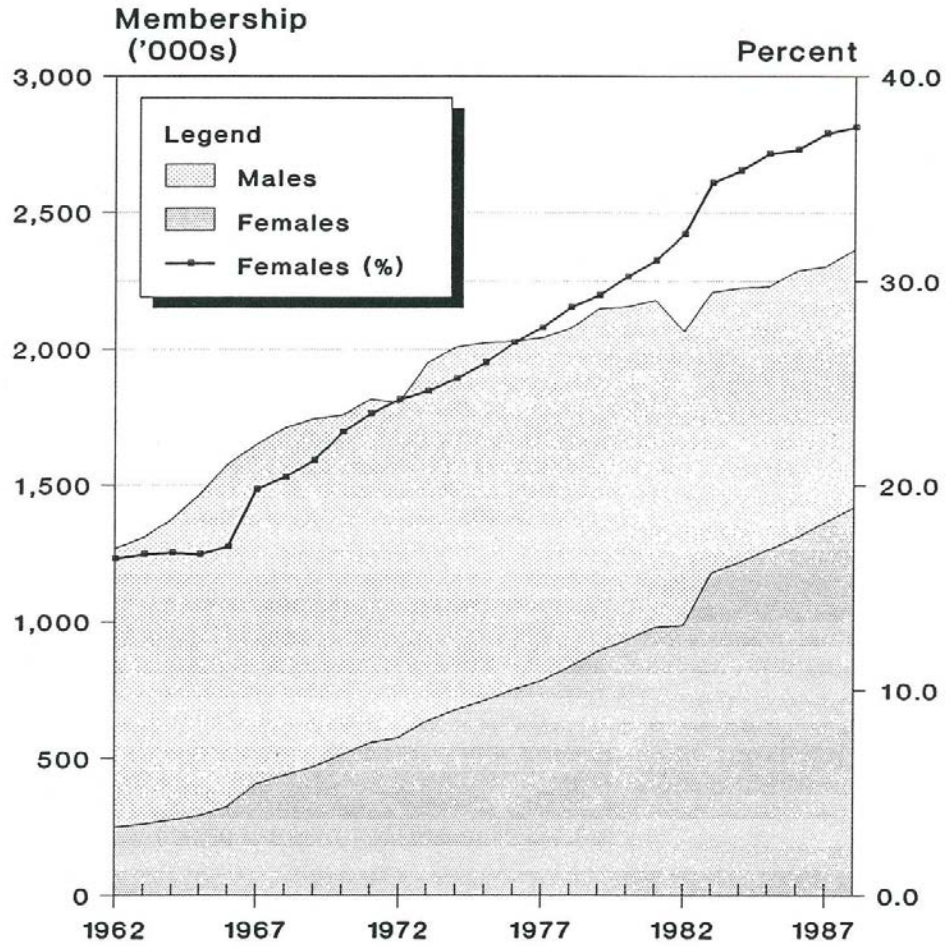
However, faced with the fundamental changes in the workforce and in family structure, the rapid growth in female union membership (Chart 6), a desire to encourage full participation of both men and women members in union activities and the potential that incorporating work and family issues into union agendas can have for organizing new members, particularly women, unions have become more responsive to the need to assist workers in meeting work and family demands.

In the collective bargaining arena, unions are stepping up their demands for collective agreement provisions relating to family care and benefits. The Conference Board of Canada study also noted the increasingly responsive role some unions were playing in addressing work and family responsibilities at the bargaining table and some of the joint labour-management initiatives in this area (MacBride-King 1990b).

A variety of provisions have been negotiated in the area of paid and unpaid leave, alternative work arrangements and dependent care benefits. An analysis of provisions in major collective agreements (covering bargaining units of 500 and more

¹⁰ However, the labour movement does point out that labour's improvement of family life included the fight for a living wage; shorter working hours which made leisure possible for the family; the fight for public education; the fight against child labour; the struggle for pensions, public health care; child care, maternity and parental benefits, pay equity, reproductive choice and affordable housing' (Ontario Federation of Labour 1989, 1).

**Chart 6: Trends in Union Marketing
Canada, 1962-1987**



Source: Statistics Canada. *Annual Report ... Under the Corporations and Labour Unions Returns Act, Part II - Labour Unions.*

employees) reveals that the most prevalent form of family related provisions are unpaid leaves of absence surrounding the birth or adoption of a child (see Appendix). The period of leave usually corresponds to the standard 17-week period covered by the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program or for a longer period of up to 26 weeks where this is required by employment standards legislation.¹¹ Many agreements contain additional clauses which imply that leave of absence is available if there are 'extenuating circumstances' (eg, medical complications) that prevent a return to work and in many cases, the specified periods are minimal that can be extended at the employer's discretion. Paid maternity leave provisions are less common; bargaining in this area has focused on supplementing benefits available from the UI program, generally to provide between 75 and 100 percent of regular salary during the UI period. Paternity or extended parental leaves are not as common. The first comprehensive family-leave provisions were negotiated in 1980 in the federal public service (Bean 1989). Included in the agreements were:

- paternity leave without pay for up to 26 weeks;
- adoption leave without pay for up to 26 weeks;
- leave without pay for personal needs of up to one year;
- leave for the care and nurturing of pre-school children of up to one year;
- leave for temporary relocation of a spouse for up to five years;
- leave for permanent relocation of a spouse for up to one year;
- leave for pay for full or partial days for family-related responsibilities, such as medical or school appointments or sickness in the family.

Fifty-eight percent of all major agreements provide for union business leave and 61 percent provided for full-time union office leave which would assist union members in balancing their family-work-union roles. About one-third of agreements contained provisions for family illness leave and 63 percent provided for personal reasons leave which conceivably could be used to help balance work and family demands.

A much smaller proportion of collective agreements provide for flexible work arrangements such as compressed work weeks, the right to vary hours, part-time work, or job sharing. This may largely reflect the cautious approach unions have taken to alternative work schedules. The Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) negotiated an innovative 'weekend worker' arrangement in a 1987 agreement with 3M Canada Inc. in London, Ontario which has been negotiated in other collective agreements. Under this provision, CAW members can work permanent weekend shifts — 12 hours each Saturday and Sunday and

¹¹ Some of the details on family-related leave provisions in collective agreements were provided by Labour Canada.

be paid for a full work week with full benefits, holidays and vacations. It has been reported that,

[m]anagement at companies where we have negotiated this provision are pleased with the results: reduced absenteeism, increased productivity and lower costs ... [1] or the workers who choose the weekend shifts, it means a shorter workweek without a cut in pay. It also allows workers to spend more time with young children, or gives them a chance to go back to school or to ease into retirement. (White 1989, 32)

Only two percent of all major agreements provide for daycare facilities. In 1983, the CAW and Canadian Fabricated Products Ltd in Stratford, Ontario negotiated a childcare fund in their agreement becoming the first agreement in the private sector in Canada to include such a provision. The company agreed to pay two cents per hour per worker to the fund which was used to create additional spaces at an existing childcare centre in Stratford. In its 1987 agreement with the Big Three auto companies (General Motors, Ford and Chrysler), the CAW negotiated a childcare fund of five cents per hour per worker and in the 1990 round of bargaining, increased funding of up to one cent per hour will be available for childcare programs (White 1989 and Coates 1991). In April, 1990, the CAW-Canada Child Care Centre opened in Windsor, Ontario which, when fully operational, will provide 16 infant care spaces and 41 childcare spaces on a two-shift operation, on a site convenient to General Motors, Ford and Chrysler workers in Windsor. The costs are partially subsidized by provincial operating grants and one-half cent per hour worked from the Overtime Contingency Fund (Canadian Auto Workers 1990). The CAW also developed on-site childcare for members attending meetings or programs at the CAW Family Education Centre in Port Elgin, Ontario. An agreement between the CUPE and the YWCA of Metropolitan Toronto was one of the first to include a program which provides a monthly payment for employees with children to help offset childcare expenses (Ontario Women's Directorate 1991). Many unions also have policies for the reimbursement of childcare expenses or to provide on-site childcare at union meetings and conventions.

Union counselling, substance abuse, prepaid legal services provisions have also been negotiated on a limited basis. These types of provisions can assist employees in coping with the difficulties and stress associated with balancing work and family demands.

The emphasis that unions are placing on work and family issues is underscored by the adoption of resolutions and policy statements. For example, the Report of the Women's Committee to the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)'s Constitutional Convention in May 1990 called for improved maternity, parental leave and family responsibilities benefits and for affiliates to make such provisions a priority in all future negotiations (Canadian Labour Congress 1990a). In a document outlining labour's strategy for the next decade, the CLC stated that,

[o]ne of the things that stands as a barrier to the full equality of men and women at the workplace is the fact that women are still forced to accept most of the responsibilities for managing the household. As part of its struggle for workplace equality, the labour movement must do all that it can to encourage the equal sharing of household responsibilities. In this regard, the labour movement can and should lead by example. It should organize all of its own activities including: conventions, political campaigns, organizing drives, collective bargaining, education sessions, etc. — to make it as easy as possible for men and women to participate on an equal basis. Serious questions have to be asked, for example, about whether all-day and all-night bargaining sessions, or lengthy residential education sessions, are equally accessible to men and women members. (Canadian Labour Congress 1990b)

The CLC intends to put out a comprehensive family policy to its membership before the 1994 convention.¹²

Unions have also engaged in legislative and political lobbying and formed coalitions with groups outside the labour movement on several issues relating to work and family responsibilities. For example, on the childcare issue, unions have joined with advocacy groups, women's groups, churches, ethnic groups and educators (eg, the Canadian Daycare Advocacy Association and Ontario Coalition for Better Childcare) to bring the debate for a comprehensive, high quality, accessible, affordable, non-profitable and government-funded childcare system to the political arena. Unions have also stressed the importance of organizing childcare workers to ensure adequate wages, benefits and working conditions.

Recently, the labour movement has campaigned against Sunday shopping, or more correctly-put from the unions' point of view, Sunday working. Among the negative effects of Sunday shopping/working outlined by unions are the 'dramatic social disruption for families of retail workers' and the 'increased burden on an already inadequate daycare system' (United Food and Commercial Workers International Union no date). Unions have also been active in the area of legislative lobbying calling on governments for improvements in family legislation, adequate income maintenance during the leave and affordable and high quality childcare.

¹² For other policy statements on work and family issues see Ontario Federation of Labour 1989, National Union of Provincial Government Employees 1990, and Canadian Auto Workers 1989.

What are Governments Doing?

Despite the gains that unions have made through collective bargaining and the initiatives developed by some, generally larger, organizations, the availability of family-supportive policies and programs is uneven. Therefore, governments are also facing increased pressures for legislation and public policy that recognizes the integration of work and family roles among today's workforce and that assists workers in balancing paid work and family responsibilities.

Public policies and programs must reflect the realities of family life, the growing participation of women in the workforce, the balancing of work and family life, and the changing role of the extended family...(Speech from the Throne November 20, 1990)

Ontario recently became the first province to recognize the 'changing role of the extended family' when it extended employee benefits coverage to same gender couples (Mackie 1990, A1).¹³ The policy affects public service employees who are members of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union and benefits to be extended include dependent life insurance, extended medical coverage, dental insurance and bereavement leave. It was also reported that the province will be reviewing policies and legislation that involve the issue of spousal definition. In recent amendments to the maternity and parental leave provisions of the Ontario Employment Standards Act, 'parent' was redefined to extend to a person who has a 'relationship of some permanence with a parent of a child and who intends to treat the child as his or her own'¹³.

In the legislative framework, human rights legislation in the federal and all provincial/territorial jurisdictions prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex and marital status. In the federal jurisdiction, Alberta, Ontario, Quebec and the Yukon Territory, discrimination on the basis of pregnancy/childbirth is prohibited and in the federal jurisdiction, Manitoba, Ontario and the Northwest Territories, discrimination on the basis of family status is prohibited?¹⁴

There is wide variation across Canada in the employment standards legislation relating to pregnancy, adoption and parental leave (Kumar, Arrowsmith and Coates Forthcoming). All jurisdictions in Canada have legislation providing unpaid maternity leave, typically of 17-18 weeks in duration with various qualifying periods, usually 12 months of continuous employment with the same employer. Some jurisdictions require that seniority and benefits be frozen at the date leave commenced while others provide that these accumulate throughout the period.

¹³ The article reported that the government of the Northwest Territories, the City of Toronto, Ontario Hydro, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and the Ontario Federation of Labour have also extended family benefit coverage to same gender spouses.

¹⁴ In Alberta, Ontario, Manitoba and the Yukon, discrimination on the basis of pregnancy is included in discrimination on the basis of sex. The anti-discrimination provisions in human rights legislation in Canada are detailed in Kumar, Arrowsmith and Coates (Forthcoming).

Most provinces offer adoption leave from 6 to 17 weeks and some jurisdictions have legislation for paternity and/or parental leave.¹⁵ To date, no jurisdiction has employment standards legislation that provides family responsibility leave to employees for attention to illness or care of family members (Ontario Ministry of Labour 1989).

In addition, federal Unemployment Insurance (UI) legislation provides for 15 weeks of maternity benefits in the period surrounding the birth of a child. Ten weeks of parental benefits are also available to natural or adoptive parents, either father or mother, or shared between them. Fifteen weeks of sickness benefits are provided. An additional five weeks of UI benefits are available for adoptive parents with children six months of age and over and who need additional care. Sickness, maternity and parental benefits may be combined within the same benefit period, up to a cumulative maximum of 30 weeks.¹⁶

Other federal family-supportive government policies include sharing expenditures with the provinces, territories and municipalities on homes for special care such as homes for the aged and nursing homes and subsidized childcare services for low-income families under the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP);¹⁷ income tax provisions such as the Child Care Expense Deduction permits taxpayers to claim a deduction from taxable income for child care expenses and provisions which allow claims/credits for dependent children; and the Family Allowance program provides taxable monthly payments to all families with children under 18 years of age.

¹⁵ Up until late 1990, only the federal jurisdiction provided for family-related leave other than maternity, adoption or paternity leave. During the past six months, Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba, and British Columbia have amended their employment standards legislation to revise maternity leave provisions and establish unpaid parental leave, largely in response to amendments to the federal UI Act which are discussed below.

¹⁶ Maternity, parental and sickness benefits were substantially revised under Bill C-21, An Act to Amend the Unemployment Insurance Act, passed in October 1990. The amendments, designed to increase the flexibility and duration of benefits and meet the requirements of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, were prompted by two significant court decisions. In *Schacter v. The Queen* (88 CLLC 14,022), the Federal Court of Appeal found that distinctions between benefits available to adoptive parents and natural parents discriminated against natural fathers and was a violation of equality rights under s.15 of the *Charter* (Kumar and Coates 1989). In *Brooks v. Canada Safeway Ltd* (89 CLLC 17,012), the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that pregnancy is a valid health-related reason for absence from work and therefore, the disentitlement of pregnant women during a 17-week maternity leave from receiving accident or sickness benefits under the employer's plan constitutes discrimination by reason of pregnancy and discrimination on the basis of pregnancy is discrimination on the basis of sex.

¹⁷ Provincial and territorial governments also provide financial support for childcare through tax relief, subsidized care for low-income families, operating grants, grants for start-up or repair; and grants for care of special needs children. Municipal governments in some provinces also contribute to childcare costs or provide services.

In 1984, the federal government appointed a Task Force on Child Care to examine and assess the need for childcare and parental leave in Canada which issued its report and recommendations in 1986 (Status of Women Canada 1986). The government responded by appointing a Special Committee on Child Care which issued its report in 1987. Subsequently, the government announced its National Strategy on Child Care which included a new federal-provincial cost-sharing agreement, a Child Care Special Initiatives Fund and enhanced tax assistance initiatives to families with young children (Canada 1987). A new Canada Child Care Act which was to replace the daycare provisions of the CAP and increase the number of quality childcare spaces in Canada by 200,000 over a seven-year period, was introduced in Parliament in July 1988 but did not become law before a federal election was called in November 1988. In its federal budget in April 1989, it was announced that

the government is not in a position to proceed at the present time with its proposal to accelerate the creation of child care spaces. It will act during this mandate to meet its child care objectives. In the interim, the government will continue to share costs of child care services under the Canada Assistance Plan. (Canada Department of Finance 1989, 7)

In the last two budgets, the federal government has implemented an Expenditure Control Plan which limits CAP transfers to Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia. One observer has stated that

... the concept of a big-budget national [childcare] program could soon be abandoned. Instead it is likely to be replaced by a small-scale package of tax incentives and subsidies to employers to encourage workplace day care ... The solution, from the government's point of view, could be a child-care program that is founded on the resources of the private sector. Increasingly, federal officials are talking of a 'partnership' with the private sector. (York 1990, D2)

In the past, government policies have played a relatively limited role in addressing work and family issues and responses have tended to be reactive rather than proactive. Canada has never adopted either a comprehensive or coherent family policy (Schwartz 1988, 76) and it has 'failed] to recognize and accommodate the need of modern parents to combine both work and family responsibilities' (Status of Women Canada 1986, 279). Most of the legislative efforts have focused on unpaid leave through employment standards legislation and some income support, primarily through the UI Act. There is wide variation across Canada in maternity and parental leave in terms of the qualifying period, the period of leave, and job security provisions. Certain groups of workers are excluded from legislative provisions (e.g., workers who have changed jobs during the year, domestic workers and farm laborers are ineligible for statutory maternity/adoption/parental provisions in certain provincial employment standards legislation and not all workers are eligible for UI benefits). Statutory provisions relating to broader family responsibility needs (e.g., when family members are ill, caregivers are unavailable, medical and teacher appointments,

etc.) are virtually nonexistent. Canada's parental leave system does not compare favorably with most western industrialized countries (Status of Women Canada 1986 and Labour Canada 1988).

Employees feel that the government has a role to play in solving work and family care problems (MacBride-King 1990a). The labour movement also sees an urgent need for public policy in this area. It remains to be seen whether recent public policy initiatives towards balancing work and family responsibilities signal a new policy approach to work and family issues.

Conclusion

Driven by profound changes in the economy, the composition of the labour force and family structure, the need for effective responses to the growing integration of work and family responsibilities is becoming an important concern for employers, employees, labour unions and governments. The issue is a complex and multifaceted one — for example, childcare, eldercare, part-time employment and pay and employment equity are only a few of the difficult `spin-off` issues that emerge when discussing work and family issues. Multiple approaches and strategies are required.

The employers' desire to achieve competitive cost structures and governments' pursuit of restraint in expenditure can limit the development of effective work and family initiatives. On the other hand, the question that arises is: with the need for a productive and efficient workforce in the competitive environment of the 1990s, amidst a slowdown in labour force growth and shortages of workers, can employers and governments afford not to recognize, understand and accept the interplay between work and family issues and respond with appropriate measures that reconcile employee needs and organizational goals? As a recent article stated:

To compete successfully in the global economy of the next decade, wise leaders will surround themselves with the best people who, increasingly, will come not only with talent and skills, but with needs that they expect organizations to recognize and support. Their commitment to the organization's goals will be as strong as the organization's commitment to their personal goals. (Mikalachki and Mikalachki 1991, 52)

The critical challenge for employers, unions, and governments will be developing strategies and approaches that emphasize the importance of work and family and their interdependence so that neither is encouraged at the expense of the other. Meeting the challenge will create significant adaptations and adjustments in attitudes, policies and practices. Given their mutual needs and concerns, there is ample opportunity for a new partnership between the 'agents of change' — employers, employees, unions and governments — in order to address the new dynamics of the workplace and the family and enable men and women to contribute fully both in the workplace and at home.

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APPENDIX

**Collective Agreement Provisions in Canada, January 1991
All Industries, 500 or More Employees (Excluding Construction)**

	<i>Agreements</i>		<i>Employees</i>	
	<i>No</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>%</i>
TOTAL	1,002	100.0	2,081.6	100.0
<i>Hours of Work</i>				
<i>Compressed Work Week</i>				
Provision	152	15.2	418.6	20.1
<i>Weekly Basis</i>				
< 35 hours	23	2.3	27.5	1.3
35 hours	100	10.0	300.5	14.4
> 35 hours, < 40 hours	231	23.1	700.8	33.7
40 hours	428	42.7	719.2	34.5
> 40 hours	21	2.1	39.4	1.9
<i>Right to Vary Hour¹</i>				
<i>(Maintain Scheduled Hours)</i>				
Provision	86	8.6	289.9	13.9
<i>Right to Vary Hours¹</i>				
<i>(No Scheduled Hours)</i>				
Provision	5	0.5	6.6	0.3
<i>Right to a Compressed WorkWeek¹</i>				
Provision	152	15.2	418.6	20.1
<i>Part-Time Work</i>				
<i>Health and Welfare</i>				
Provision	238	23.8	757.8	36.4
<i>Holidays</i>				
Provision	266	26.5	921.7	44.3
<i>Hours of Work</i>				
Provision	242	24.2	771.1	37.0
<i>Other Clauses</i>				
Provision	1	0.1	3.5	0.2
<i>Part-Time to Full-Time Ratio</i>				
Provision	14	1.4	39.6	1.9
<i>Pensions</i>				
Provision	53	5.3	132.6	6.4

¹ Employer's concurrence required

APPENDIX (Continued)

**Collective Agreement Provisions in Canada, January 1991
All Industries, 500 or More Employees (Excluding Construction)**

	<i>Agreements</i>		<i>Employees</i>	
	<i>No</i>		<i>No</i>	
<i>Pro-rated Benefits</i>				
Provision	87	8.7	219.6	10.5
<i>Seniority</i>				
Provision	281	28.0	842.5	40.5
<i>Severance Pay</i>				
Provision	104	10.4	490.0	23.5
<i>Sick Leave</i>				
Provision	270	26.9	876.2	42.1
<i>Vacation</i>				
Provision	282	28.1	956.1	46.0
<i>Job Sharing</i>				
Provision	66	6.6	103.1	5.0
<i>Work Sharing</i>				
Provision	18	1.8	21.1	1.1
Leave of Absence				
<i>Adoption Leave (Celebration)</i>				
Provision	321	32.0	958.1	46.1
<i>Adoption Leave - Duration (Normal)</i>				
Provision	538	53.7	1,445.6	69.4
<i>Adoption Leave - Paid</i>				
Provision	138	13.8	538.4	25.9
<i>Adoption Leave - Seniority</i>				
Retained	43	4.3	78.3	3.8
Fully or partly accumulated	300	29.9	956.3	45.9
<i>Bereavement Leave</i>				
Provision	916	91.4	1,955.3	93.9
<i>Education Leave - Job Related</i>				
Paid	180	18.0	442.0	21.2
Part paid	49	4.9	88.2	4.2
Unpaid	81	8.1	337.1	16.2
Unknown	41	4.1	77.4	3.7

APPENDIX (Continued)

Collective Agreement Provisions in Canada, January 1991
All Industries, 500 or More Employees (Excluding Construction)

	<i>Agreements</i>		<i>Employees</i>	
	<i>No</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Education Leave - Sabbatical</i>				
Paid (part or whole)	65	6.5	61.8	3.0
Unpaid	8	0.8	93.1	4.5
Unknown	4	0.4	3.8	0.2
<i>Education Leave - Union Education</i>				
Paid (part or whole)	62	6.2	155.7	7.5
Unpaid	103	10.3	305.4	14.7
Unknown	9	0.9	9.6	0.5
<i>Illness in Family Leave</i>				
Provision	345	34.4	856.9	41.2
<i>Marriage Leave</i>				
Provision	216	21.6	827.7	39.8
<i>Maternity Leave - Maximum Duration (Normal Circumstance)</i>				
Provision	791	78.9	1,794.0	86.2
<i>Maternity Leave - Pay</i>				
Provision	374	37.3	1,069.8	51.4
<i>Maternity Leave - Retention of Seniority</i>				
Provision	531	53.0	1,293.1	62.1
<i>Negotiations Leave</i>				
Provision	569	56.8	1,346.3	64.7
<i>Parental Leave (Extended)</i>				
Provision	143	14.3	663.7	31.9
<i>Paternity Leave (Celebration)</i>				
Provision	419	41.8	1,147.9	55.1
<i>Paternity Leave (Extended)</i>				
Provision	149	14.9	591.6	28.4
<i>Personal Reasons Leave</i>				
Provision	629	62.8	1,327.4	63.8
<i>Political Activity Leave</i>				
Provision	23	2.3	69.4	3.3

APPENDIX (Continued)

**Collective Agreement Provisions in Canada, January 1991
All Industries, 500 or More Employees (Excluding Construction)**

	<i>Agreements No</i>		<i>Employees No</i>	
<i>Political Office Leave (Run or Hold)</i>				
Provision	288	28.7	777.6	37.4
<i>Union Business Leave</i>				
Provision	573	57.2	1,289.9	62.0
<i>Union Office Leave (Full-Time)</i>				
Provision	609	60.8	1,374.4	66.0
<i>Quality of Working Life (QWL)</i>				
Committee	20	15.5	78.3	30.6
Job Rotation	20	15.5	24.8	9.7
Consultation	79	61.2	176.2	68.9
QWL Facilities (Health & Recreational)	26	20.2	52.8	20.6
Other	10	7.8	15.6	6.1
<i>Employment Equity</i>				
<i>Affirmative Action</i>				
Provision	52	5.2	180.0	8.6
<i>Anti-Discrimination</i>				
Provision	512	51.1	1,376.1	66.1
<i>Equal Pay</i>				
Equal work	40	4.0	81.5	3.9
Work of equal value	74	7.4	393.8	18.9
<i>Older Worker</i>				
Provision	92	9.2	162.7	7.8
<i>Sexual Harassment</i>				
Provision	258	25.7	948.3	45.6
<i>Employee Assistance</i>				
<i>Day Care Facilities</i>				
Provision	22	2.2	71.1	3.4
<i>Rehabilitation Programs</i>				
Provision	157	15.7	525.1	25.2
<i>Tobacco Control</i>				
Provision	13	1.3	21.9	1.1
<i>Pre-paid Legal Aid</i>				
Provision	63	6.3	370.1	17.8

Source: Labour Canada, Bureau of Labour Information.



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