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Work and Family: Programs that Help to Balance the Dual Role

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Executive Summary

Many Canadians are now working a ‘double day,’ completing their paid work outside the home only to begin their unpaid work in the home. The stress resulting from this double burden of work and family responsibilities is clearly visible in the workplace, in the form of declining employee productivity. Unfortunately, many Canadian organizations have been slow to respond to the problem and see the costs involved in work-family programs as an expense rather than an investment. But as human resource strategies focus on retaining and motivating a committed work force in order to survive in the current competitive environment, organizations will have little choice but to change. Based on her detailed study of work and family benefits at a leading-edge biotechnology company in North York, Ontario, the author of this study identifies key components of an effective work-family program and shows how organizations can build on the ad hoc family-friendly provisions that are often already in place to develop a coherent, effective program that will improve employee morale, foster commitment, and increase productivity.

- If an organization is to establish a work-family program that actually benefits employees, it must first do a comprehensive survey of employee needs. Only then can it target benefits appropriately.
- A work-family committee could carry out the survey, thereby bringing the problem to the top of the organizational agenda and demonstrating to employees that the employer is indeed committed to helping them balance their dual roles.
- Accommodating practices that are often administered on an ad hoc basis and rolled in with other benefits should instead be incorporated into a well-advertised, coherent work-family policy and communicated in writing to employees to provide them with clear pathways for dealing with the problem.
- Variable work arrangements such as a compressed workweek, job-sharing, and part-time employment can help workers successfully coordinate work and family schedules at minimal cost to employers.

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About the Author

Leah L. Zadel is currently a Human Resources Advisor at Trillium Health Centre, a progressive community hospital in Mississauga. She holds a Master of Industrial Relations degree from Queen’s University and an Honors Bachelor of Social Work degree from King’s College at the University of Western Ontario.

- Many organizations offer programs that help employees with day care; many allow employees extra days of paid or unpaid leave to be used for family responsibilities.
- Flexible, ‘cafeteria-style’ benefits are available in many organizations. Employees are able to choose benefits more suitable to their family’s needs: central, core benefits are part of all packages, but employees who belong to dual-earner households can choose plans that prevent overlap and allow for broader family coverage of various benefits. Flexible packages increase employee choice without increasing employer cost.
- In general, the research shows that work-family programs are cost-effective in helping to relieve stress, reduce absenteeism, and improve morale and productivity.

Introduction

Balancing work and family responsibilities is a serious problem for many Canadian workers who are now required to put in a ‘double day,’ completing their paid job only to begin unpaid work in the home. Although workers of both genders must deal with the problem, women feel the most stress in juggling the two roles. Often this stress begins to infringe on work habits and impair both personal and work performance. Many organizations have therefore recognized that provisions that help workers to balance their work and family responsibilities can build dedication, reduce turnover and absenteeism, and contribute to the organization’s bottom line.

This study begins with a general analysis of work and family issues and the options facing Canadian workers. Then, against that background, it proceeds to analyze the programs offered to employees at Pasteur Merieux Connaught Canada. Extensive interviews conducted by the author with company executives are the principal source of data for this analysis. The study concludes with several practical recommendations for organizations that wish to improve employee productivity in the current competitive environment by helping their employees reduce the stress that inevitably arises from work and family responsibilities.

Changing Demographics

The Changing Canadian Labour Force

The changing Canadian labour force is one of the key factors underlying the growing significance of work-family related issues: the labour force today is significantly different from the predominantly male, full-time labour force of the 1970s. The most important change has been the significant increase in the number of women participating in the labour force. In the mid-1970s, women accounted for only 37 percent of the labour force. Now, women make up 46 percent of the labour force, and 57 percent of women work outside the home (table 1). Women also accounted for approximately 66 percent of the increase in the total labour force from 1975 to 1995. In 1995, there were 6.8 million women in the paid labour force.

The labour force today is significantly different from the predominantly male, full-time labour force of the 1970s.

Table 1 Demographic Changes in the Labour Force

	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995
Total labour force	10,060,000	12,054,155	13,049,860	14,474,945	14,812,700
Number of women in the labour force	3,697,000	4,989,890	5,608,685	6,517,105	6,804,745
Women as a percent of total labour force	36.7	40.6	43.0	45.0	46.0
Percentage change in the labor force attributable to women, from 1975		60.2	64.0	64.0	65

Source: Statistics Canada (monthly, annual, 1989b, and 1996).

Not only has the number of women entering the labour force increased, there has been a significant increase in the number of women staying in the work force after marriage. In 1995, 62 percent of married women were in the labour force, up from 31 percent in 1991 (Statistics Canada 1996). In 1995, more than 4.2 million married women were in the labour force, up from 2.2 million twenty years before, in 1975 (table 2).

Many married working women also have children. In 1995, roughly 70 percent of mothers with children under 16 were employed; a striking 67 percent of mothers that were employed had children under the age of six. These numbers have risen dramatically since 1975, when 50 percent of mothers with children under 16 worked outside the home and 37 percent of mothers with children under six did so (Statistics Canada 1996). The working mother trend has continued since 1975, when the labour force participation rate of working mothers with children was 44.5 percent compared to 60.6 percent in 1985 and 69.2 percent in 1995: an increase of almost 25 percent over twenty years (table 2). Often the mother is still the primary caregiver, with the result that working mothers are most at risk of experiencing role overload and work-family stress.

Table 2 Labour Force Participation of Married Women

	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995
Number of married women in the labour force	2,265,600	2,883,845	3,367,290	4,057,765	4,221,615
Labour force participation rate of women with children (%)	44.5	52.4	60.6	68.4	69.2
Number of working women with children under 16	1,106,845	1,472,640	1,760,805	1,924,120	2,306,830
Number of working women with children under 6	548,455	448,085	559,590	563,375	654 610

Source: Statistics Canada (1979, 1989a, and 1996).

Since the 1970s, there has also been a dramatic increase in 'non-standard' employment. Fewer full-time, secure jobs are being created, and employers are opting instead for more 'fluid' part-time work arrangements and on-call employment. In fact, 'non-standard employment has represented 45% of the overall job growth since the mid-1970s and now accounts for over 30% of all jobs' (Betcherman and Chaykowski 1996). Part-time and other non-standard work has increased largely as a result of the preference of many working mothers who seek out the flexibility of part-time, temporary arrangements: as a result, more than two-thirds of part-time employees are female.

The Changing Canadian Family

The structure of the Canadian family has changed significantly over the past twenty years. One notable trend is the dramatic increase in the number of 'dual-earner' families, in which both partners work outside the home. By 1995, dual-earner families made up 45.5 percent of all husband-wife families, compared with 41.4 percent in 1980 (table 3). This trend is, of course, a result of the dramatic increase in labour force participation by women and of the various opportunities, already discussed, that make employment outside the home a viable option. A second contributing factor has been the decline in income relative

One trend is the dramatic increase in the number of 'dual-earner' families.

to the cost of living, making it necessary for both partners to work: families now require two incomes to equal their earnings of 1980 (Conference Board 1994).

Table 3 Dual-Earner Families

	1980	1985	1990	1995
Number of dual-earner families	2,323,150	2,552,005	3,063,005	3,048,555
Percentage of all husband-wife families	41.4	43.4	47.8	45.5

Source: Statistics Canada, *Daily*, May 12, 1998.

A second trend in family structure is the striking increase since 1980 in the number of single-parent families (table 4). Between 1980 and 1995 single-parent families represented 30 percent of the increase in the number of Canadian families, reaching 1.1 million, or 14.5 percent, of all Canadian families in 1995 (Statistics Canada 1996).

Table 4 Single-Parent Families

	1980	1985	1990	1995
Number of single-parent families	713,815	853,300	953,645	1,137,510
Percentage of all families	11.2	12.7	13.0	14.5

Source: Statistics Canada, *Daily*, May 12, 1998.

Clearly, a single-income family operating in a dual-earner society will experience financial difficulties. Operating in tight economic constraints, it is often the single parent who is burdened most by work and family issues. The sacrifices required by employment, such as finding adequate and affordable childcare, often outweigh the benefits of working outside the home, since a large portion of the income of those that do work outside the home is spent on ensuring that their children are properly cared for. An additional issue arises in the care of the home. Because single parents are solely responsible for duties of the family and home, the tensions of paid work can only be increased by family responsibilities.

Once again, women are affected most by this trend, since single-parent households headed by women outnumber those headed by men 4 to 1: in 1995, 83 percent of all single parents were women; in contrast, only 16.9 percent were men (Statistics Canada 1996).

The Double Burden

In the past, one partner was often entirely responsible for family earnings, while the other tended to the home and children. But now that women have moved into the labour force, these previously separate responsibilities have begun to infringe on one another as many women work a full paid workday but are still responsible for the full workload within the home. That is, although the labour force participation of women has risen dramatically, the gender distribution of household responsibilities has not changed accordingly, leaving women with a double burden.

Women consistently devote more time than men to unpaid work in the home, regardless of employment status. The 1996 census reports that the majority of working¹ women with children under 15 at home spend 15 to 29 hours per week on unpaid housework in the home, while the majority of their working male counterparts spend approximately 5

¹ 'Working' is defined as being in the paid labour force for 30 or more hours per week.

A second trend in family structure is the striking increase in the number of single-parent families.

Distracted employees are unable to concentrate fully on their jobs, productivity declines, and rates of absenteeism, tardiness, and injury increase.

to 14 hours on housework on a weekly basis. Furthermore, while the majority of working wives with children under 6 spend 30 to 59 hours per week caring for children, the majority of working husbands with children under 6 spend 5 to 14 hours per week on unpaid childcare in the home (Statistics Canada, *Daily*, March 17, 1998).

Balancing work and family roles has long been considered a problem for parents with young children. But more recently, attention has also been directed to employees who also have responsibilities for other family members, most notably the elderly (Neal et al. 1993). Employees are often ‘sandwiched’ between caring for elderly relatives and providing care for their own children, which, coupled with a paid full-time job, can take a heavy toll on Canadian workers (MacBride-King 1990a, 3).

Employees, primarily women, face a ‘double burden’: two distinct sources of stress are placing immense pressure on employees who are forced to put in a ‘double day’—completing a full workday for their employer, only to start a full workday for their family. The resulting stress is exacerbated by the fact that household work is not shared equally when both partners work outside the home.

The results are clearly visible in the workplace, where distracted employees are unable to concentrate fully on their jobs, productivity declines, and rates of absenteeism, tardiness, and injury increase. In the Human Resource Practices Survey of Betcherman et al. (1994), over two-thirds of respondents noted that work-family conflict had manifested itself in workplace problems.

Family-Responsive Benefits and Policies

Because a large proportion of the work force has family obligations, in addition to their work roles, family-responsive policies, programs, and benefits are no longer simply progressive acts but, rather, necessary responses to contemporary socioeconomic realities (Conference Board 1994). Thus, many workplaces now have programs to help their employees balance the competing needs of work and family.

Variable Work Arrangements

Variable work arrangements change the traditional workday so that workers can successfully coordinate home and work schedules and take time off to tend to their family responsibilities. The four main categories of variable work arrangements are flextime, a compressed workweek, job sharing, and part-time employment.

With flextime and compressed workweeks employees have the option to choose their hours of work. Often the employee is obligated to work during set ‘core’ hours, but the remaining hours in the workweek can be distributed at the employee’s discretion. However, those who opt for this type of arrangement are not at liberty to change their hours continually; they must adopt a regular routine. In the case of a compressed workweek an employee is able to work the required number of work hours in fewer days. A common example is working four days of ten hours each, as opposed to the regular five days of eight hours.

Job-sharing is a method of reducing individual work hours: the total work hours of a full-time job are shared between two or more employees, not necessarily equally. Job-sharing gives employees greater flexibility, allowing them to attend to family emergencies without affecting the employer. A disadvantage of job-sharing, however, is that since a full-time job is shared, so are the benefits and vacation time associated with the position.

Part-time work also provides employees with more time to deal with family responsibilities. But part-time jobs are often insecure, and they pay less and offer fewer, if any,

benefits. If organizations intend to use part-time work to alleviate the double burden, they must make it more attractive to employees by ensuring job security and providing for competitive compensation and benefits.

These variable work arrangements come at minimal cost to organizations—except for the more complex scheduling involved—but they are invaluable to some employees. They can also benefit organizations by reducing turnover and improving employee morale and commitment (Conference Board 1994). Not all jobs and work responsibilities are suitable for such arrangements, however. They are most common among workers in managerial and professional jobs (in finance, insurance and real estate, for example) and least common among manufacturing workers (Statistics Canada 1995). In addition, because of economic constraints, variable arrangements may not be feasible for some employees, since they lead to a reduction in take-home pay.

Dependent Care Assistance

Many organizations now offer programs to help employees locate and coordinate day care for their children. Some even offer on-site or near-site day-care facilities, but this option is too expensive to be very common. A more economical, but equally helpful, option is for organizations to provide partial funding for recognized day-care facilities in the community. This approach allows organizations to avoid overhead costs and risk while aiding employees in securing reliable and affordable care for their children. Such arrangements often guarantee a certain number of day-care places for children of company employees and provide subsidies to employees using the centre. In some instances the day-care facility is reimbursed by the organization, or additional funding is allocated for the centre. This option not only promotes good employee relations, but it can also help to create good community relations for the organization (Hand and Zawacki 1994).

Some organizations are also beginning to offer resource and referral programs to employees with elderly relatives. The organization may provide a list of applicable community resources, or it may arrange direct contact and referral to institutions such as nursing and retirement homes.

Flexible Family Responsibility Leave

Many organizations allow employees extra days of paid or unpaid leave (in addition to individual sick days), to be used for family responsibilities. In some cases this leave can be taken in small increments (such as half days), allowing working parents to tend to appointments, school functions, and illness without missing an entire work day (Hand and Zawacki 1994). This 'responsibility leave' is used at the employee's discretion.

A related provision allows for extended leave for mothers and fathers after the birth or adoption of a child. This provision is in addition to legislated leave requirements imposed by the government. The added time allows for the important bonding and adjustment period for the family. Further to this, a more gradual, flexible return to work may be allowed to help new parents adjust to their new double role.

Flexible Benefit Plans

Providing flexible, or 'cafeteria-style,' benefits is an emerging trend in many organizations. Employees are able to choose the benefits that are most suitable to their family's needs. In most cases, central, core benefits are part of all the packages, but employees who belong to dual-earner households can choose plans that prevent benefit overlap and allow for broader family coverage of a variety of benefits. Flexible benefit packages allow for employee choice while maintaining the original, intended cost to the employer (Lechner and Creedon 1994).

Variable work arrangements come at minimal cost to organizations but they are invaluable to some employees.

Many organizations that currently have work-family provisions have not reviewed their employee's needs since the 1980s.

Employee Assistance Programs

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) involve core provisions such as professional short-term counselling. Information seminars, preventative education, support groups, guest speakers and referral services may also be provided. Such programs are now usually offered in a 'broadbrush' manner, covering work, family, and personal issues from stress management to family violence (BNA 1988).

The research shows that employee assistance programs help workers with problems to remain productive and that they are cost-effective in reducing absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover and morale problems (BNA 1988). They are also particularly helpful to employees attempting to deal with the stresses involved in carrying out work and family roles. However, many organizations are unfortunately only beginning to recognize the benefits that these programs can provide.

Many organizations have still not responded sufficiently to the dual burden that faces many employees. They have been slow to implement family-friendly programs, and the corporate response has often been more rhetoric than reality. It has tended to be slow, incremental, and ad hoc, and the changes have had little effect because organizational attitudes have not changed (Coates 1991). Work and family problems were very prominent on the work agenda in the late 1980s. But since then, other business objectives, such as reducing costs and downsizing, have taken precedence. Many organizations that currently have work-family provisions have not reviewed their employee's needs since the 1980s. While usual work and family policies include EAPs, alternative work arrangements, and dependent-care assistance, employees are most in need of more organizational assistance in the areas of childcare and time management (MacBride-King 1990a).

Changes at the Family Level

Because women still have the major responsibility for caregiving and housework, regardless of their employment status, they feel the most stress in balancing work and family obligations (Fredrick 1993). In a Statistics Canada study (Fredrick 1993), 28 percent of women employed outside the home on a full-time basis, felt that they were under extreme time pressures leading to stress. Only 16 percent of their male dual-earner counterparts reported this level of strain.

Clearly, then, if employees are to reduce the stress involved in balancing work and family, initiatives must begin at the family level. There must be an equal division of labour within the home if both partners are contributing a large portion of their day to paid work outside the home. If there is, they will require less at the organizational and public policy level, and it may be possible for all needs to be met if all three levels work together.

Public Policy

Governments have a key role to play in developing family policies to help Canadian workers meet work and family demands. They could make a significant contribution by developing a policy to make it easy and affordable for Canadian parents to secure care for their children. First, they could fund, or partially fund, in partnership with organizations, affordable or subsidized childcare. Second, they could pass legislation requiring organizations to implement family-friendly benefits. A third way that government can promote family-friendly policies is through tax incentives. At the corporate level, family-friendly benefits could be encouraged through tax breaks used to fund the programs (Baker 1994). At the family level, tax incentives could be given to low-income families, families that need extra support, or families that care for the elderly.

Finally, governments can set a good example by providing a family-friendly work environment to public sector workers. If private organizations have a model to follow and can view family policy in action, they may be more likely to implement such policies themselves.

Will Workers' Needs Be Met?

Organizations have entered a new era in which work and family problems have once again come to the forefront. More employees than ever before are feeling the stress of balancing work and family duties and organizations are beginning to realize that reduced productivity is the result. They are therefore seeking new ways to increase employee morale, foster company commitment, and create a positive work environment. Nevertheless, immediate economic pressures have made it difficult for firms to take the long-term perspective necessary to commit themselves to a high-performance workplace (Betcherman et al. 1994). They are so preoccupied with the short-term costs of these types of programs that they fail to see the long-run benefits of increased efficiency and better employer-employee relations.

External pressures are forcing organizations to take a closer look at the possibility of offering at least some family-friendly provisions, however. Many companies that do not have such provisions are being pressured by employees and the media to implement them. Ongoing media attention promotes the importance, value, and necessity of benefits packages that make it easier for employees with family responsibilities to be productive workers (Jenner 1994). Furthermore, businesses are now beginning to see the value of human resources and the role it can play in promoting an effective work force. As human resource strategies begin to focus their efforts on retaining and motivating a committed work force, work and family programs are much more likely to be established. In fact, organizations have little choice but to change.

Businesses are now beginning to see the value of human resources.

Work and Family at Pasteur Mérieux Connaught

The Company

The focus of this case study is Pasteur Mérieux Connaught (PMC),² which is located in North York, Ontario. PMC Canada—a wholly owned subsidiary of the Rhone-Poulenc Group, a large pharmaceutical corporation based in France—manufactures vaccines for the international market. The company has experienced phenomenal growth in past years and continues to increase production to satisfy demand in its major markets in Canada, the United States, and Europe. Most recently, PMC Canada has received a mandate to manufacture its hepatitis A vaccine for worldwide distribution.

PMC Canada, one of the country's largest research-intensive biotechnology companies, is presently working on a therapeutic vaccine against several types of human cancer, vaccination against HIV infection, vaccines that stimulate more effective immune response, and new combined vaccines that work against several diseases at once. In 1997, the company launched a ten-year cancer vaccine research program and will spend up to \$350 million on research, in partnership with various research centres, universities, hospitals and other companies across Canada. This project is the largest single biotechnology research investment ever made in Canada.

PMC Canada is Canada's leading vaccine supplier and the nation's largest fully integrated biotechnology research company. PMC Canada strives to be the fastest in the world 'from concept to customer,' while attempting to be the best at customer service.

Research Sources

Face to face interviews for this study were conducted with the director of compensation and benefits and HR planning, a senior benefits analyst, and the director of organizational effectiveness.

² As of December 16, 1999, Rhône Poulenc—the parent company of PMC—and Hoechst merged to form Aventis SA. As a result, Pasteur Mérieux Connaught has undergone a name change to Aventis Pasteur.

The sample of interview participants was selected by the director of compensation, who was the original contact. The data that emerged from the interviews was supplemented with information from the company literature listed in the references at the end of this study.

The Workforce³

There are presently 886 employees at PMC Canada. Not all are employed on the traditional full-time basis; about 8 percent (69 employees) work part-time, and 12 percent (100

employees) have flextime or compressed work-week arrangements. Approximately 52 percent (460) of all employees at PMC Canada are female. The company notes that roughly 265 employees (30 percent of its work force) have children under the age of 18 at home. More than one-quarter (26 percent) of these employees are single parents.

The work force at PMC Canada is divided into four major categories. In the first and largest category are production workers, who represent about 60 percent of all employees (530 workers). Workers in the second largest category are involved in research and development of vaccines and related products. This category of employees represents 24 percent the work force (approximately 215 employees). In the other two, smaller groups, administrative employees represent 9 percent of the work force (80 workers), and employees responsible for sales and marketing represent 7 percent (64 workers).

Two bargaining units at PMC Canada represent over half the total employee population. Both were certified in the early 1980s. The first is with the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers (CEP), previously the Energy and Chemical Worker's Union (ECWU), a broad-spectrum union representing employees from various occupations. CEP represents about 550 employees in research and technical roles, including technologists, technicians, administrative support persons, cleaners, mechanics, and shipping receivers. The second bargaining unit is a very specialized group represented by the International Union of Operating Engineers. It covers a total of 4 workers.

The Human Resources Division

Human resources (HR) at PMC Canada are considered to be extremely valuable: the company believes it is in 'the people business.' HR serves to meet the needs of the internal customer—the employee—in order to better serve the external customer. PMC Canada has a distinct vision clarifying the role of the HR team and an accompanying mission, or set of goals, outlining a means to achieve the overall HR purpose. HR management strives to be a strategic business partner by establishing and maintaining sound human capital in order to meet the demands of the external customer and business affiliates. This philosophy is outlined in the following statement:

H.R. Vision

Our vision is an innovative, knowledgeable, customer-focused team committed to fostering outstanding employee-business relationships.

H.R. Mission

Our mission is to attract, motivate and retain the best people for the organization, acting as employee advocates and business partners.

The HR function at PMC Canada is considered to be integral to organizational success. HR is a strategic business partner, a key player equal to the other administrative functions.

³ Employee numbers quoted in this paper are as of early 1998 and have increased due to growth in business.

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Compensation and Benefits at PMC Canada

At PMC Canada benefits and compensation are seen as the key to attracting and retaining productive workers that contribute to the organization's bottom line. The company strives to have high-performing employees at all levels and has introduced compensation and rewards programs for high-performing employees.

By providing employees with competitive compensation, including work and family provisions, PMC Canada seeks to foster dedication to the organization and promote a customer-focused work team.

Work and Family Programs and Policies

At PMC Canada there is not a clear distinction between work-family benefits and regular benefits provisions. The benefits offered to PMC employees are broad in nature, and specific employee groups are not targeted. The company thinks that all employee groups should be given equal weighting, and family-specific benefits are avoided so that a particular group of employees will not be emphasized. Many benefits do, however, fit into the category of family policies and help employees to balance work and family responsibilities.

Flexible Work Arrangements

Alternative work arrangements are available to all employees at PMC Canada if their work duties and responsibilities permit them. Currently, three options are available: part-time work, job sharing, and a flextime/compressed workweek. Such arrangements allow employees to balance work and other activities, such as family responsibilities. The policy applies uniformly to all employees regardless of whether they are bargaining unit or salaried employees.

Part-time work, consisting of less than 10 percent of the total, has been in place at PMC Canada for over ten years. Part-time positions are posted, and there is little employee latitude for changing the designation of a full-time position to a part-time position. Employees may choose the flextime or job-sharing arrangement if they wish to work fewer hours.

Provisions for job sharing have been agreed upon by PMC Canada and the largest bargaining unit, the CEP. Both the company and the union acknowledge the need to accommodate the circumstances of individual employees, which helps to promote maximum efficiency and productivity for the company. Job sharing is available to all employees, and any two employees performing the same or similar work duties may propose to share a full-time job. The arrangement is subject to management and union approval.

The union recognizes job sharing through a clause in the collective agreement; the company also recognizes it in the HR policy manual, which, like the collective agreement, outlines the key features:

- 1.1 Job sharing is a voluntary arrangement between two employees and Connaught to divide the responsibilities of one full time job, each doing so because they want to work less than full time.
- 1.2 Job sharing involves permanent positions where employees share the income, benefits, and rights of individual full time positions, on a prorated basis according to the number of hours worked.
- 1.3 Under the [collective agreement], job sharers are classified as regular, part-time employees and will be covered by the part-time articles in the [collective agreement].
- 1.4 Due to the requirements of Unemployment Insurance, it is recommended that each employee work a minimum of 15 hours a week to ensure coverage.

Many PMC Canada benefits fit into the category of family policies and help employees to balance work and family responsibilities.

Flexible work times were introduced in July 1993 on a six-month trial basis for both bargaining unit and salaried employees. This policy has since been made permanent, since it was discovered that the organization's operating needs could be maintained while allowing employees to maximize job flexibility. As with job-sharing provisions, both the union and human resources have clearly detailed the policy and key features of flextime arrangements in both the collective agreement and the HR policy manual. The relevant provisions of the policy manual are as follows:

- 1.1 Core Time—A block or blocks of time during which everyone must be present on the job. This may vary from division to division or department to department.
- 1.2 Flextime—Flexible bands during which employees can, subject to receiving permission from their Divisional Director, commence and/or leave work, as the case may be. This also may vary from division to division or department to department.
- 1.3 Work Week—It is understood that the implementation of Flextime will not affect the standard workweek of 37.5 hours. Departments may, however, subject to the approval of the Divisional Director, select one of the following workweek schedules to which core times and flexible bands will be assigned.

Both bargaining unit and salaried employees can choose from three different schedules. The first schedule is the traditional flextime option, according to which employees must be at work for core hours but can choose remaining work hours. Employees must work 7.5 hours a day (salaried employees are required to work 7 hours), with the earliest shift to run from 6:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. and the latest from 10:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M.

The second option allows employees to work a four-day compressed workweek. Bargaining unit employees are required to work 9.5 hours on Monday through Wednesday and 9 hours on Thursday. For non-bargaining unit workers, the schedule is 9 hours on Monday through Wednesday and 8 hours on Thursday.

The third option is also a compressed workweek, but one of four and a half days. Bargaining unit employees are required to work 8.25 hours on Monday to Thursday and 4.5 hours on Friday (the 30-minute lunch allowance is not included in these numbers). Salaried employees are to work 8 hours on Monday through Thursday and 3.5 hours on Friday (the unpaid lunch period is not included in this schedule).

The HR policy manual clearly states that in order to take advantage of the compressed workweek option,

Supervisors and employees must mutually come to a consensus on a work schedule that meets the requirements of the entire department, ensuring that work can be completed in an efficient manner while maintaining productivity.

Once a work schedule has been agreed upon, the divisional director must review the proposal. Upon approval, a 'personal action form' must be completed and forwarded to the diversity coordinator in human resources. The arrangement is reviewed by human resources and by the union, in the case of bargaining unit employees, to ensure compliance with company policies, relevant labour legislation, and the collective agreement.

Eldercare Advisory Service

Since 1991 PMC Canada has offered a referral service for elderly dependents. Employees are provided with a local telephone number linking them to an eldercare counseling

service that helps them to assess viable options and locate the appropriate services within their community. The service is available to all employees, and availability and eligibility is widely communicated in the company newsletter and through pamphlets available at the HR department. It is a prepaid benefit of PMC Canada, but any additional costs associated with referral to community services are the responsibility of the employee and the family. A five-year review of the program was conducted in 1997, and it was found that twenty-four employees had used it within the previous five years, at a cost of approximately \$350 per case.

Childcare

In the late 1980s PMC Canada was considering offering employees a day-care referral service or a subsidized childcare program. There was, however, a serious debate about the possibility of setting up an on-site day-care facility. It was felt that an on-site facility might be risky to children, since much of the work process at PMC Canada involves infectious materials. But as it turned out, a survey of employees revealed that there was not enough employee interest in a childcare referral service or in subsidized childcare arrangements to warrant expenditure on such benefits.

Staged Reentry and Compassionate Leave

PMC Canada offers employees 35 weeks of unpaid parental leave to care for a new child, which consists of 17 weeks for the mother and an additional 18 weeks for each parent. This provision applies to both male and female employees in cases of natural and adoptive children.

The company also has a policy for staged reentry for new mothers, which enables employees who have recently had a child to stagger their reentry into the job, perhaps by initially working a few days per week so that they become gradually accustomed to the work environment, without feeling the shock of leaving the child right away.

Compassionate leave is also offered to employees. Three compassionate leave days are allotted to each employee each year; they are deducted from and paid for through the employees' paid sick leave. In addition, employees may take their paid vacation in small increments, so that parents can attend school functions, for example, or appointments for their children.

Apart from emergency and bereavement leave, no formal family-responsibility leave exists, yet the company contends that employees may take advantage of paid vacations or compassionate leave to fulfill family obligations.

Flexible Benefits

PMC Canada does not presently offer a flexible benefits package. A standard comprehensive benefits package offered to all employees includes a health insurance plan with extended health care, a pension plan, group life insurance, a sick-leave plan, and dental, optical, and long-term disability coverage. The company has researched the possibility of offering a more flexible plan and is looking at moving toward flexible benefits packages within the next few years, in order to better accommodate the diverse needs of the work force.

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)

Employee assistance programs are fundamental in helping employees and their families deal with stress and personal problems that may hinder work performance. PMC Canada realizes the importance of such programs, and since 1993 it has offered a comprehensive EAP. The program is carried out on a confidential basis through a counseling agency within the community that specializes in such programs. Employees are encouraged to call or

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to make an appointment for any personal problem arising from family difficulties, depression, or financial and alcohol problems. The EAP strives to help employees 'improve the balance between physical and emotional well-being.'

This program is available to all employees, their spouses, and dependent children. Information about availability is communicated widely throughout the organization. The cost of EAP assessment and intensive counseling (roughly 6 hours per person) is fully covered by PMC Canada. If further referral to another community agency or professional is needed, the employee's health benefits may cover the cost. But any additional expenses associated with these services must be covered by the employee and family. In 1997, 59 employees used the EAP, which cost the company roughly \$65,000.

Recommendations

As mentioned, PMC Canada presents its benefits as part of a complete package and does not prioritize one set of benefits over another. Consequently, the company has not established a specific work-family policy, because on the surface that would appear to cater to a specific group of employees. Nevertheless, an employee's family responsibilities are respected by PMC Canada, and the company attempts to cater to individual situations.

Many of the existing work and family initiatives and resultant benefits were developed in the early 1990s by a progressive director of HR who championed efforts to accommodate the diverse needs of employees. Benchmarking with other key players in the pharmaceutical industry served as an incentive for adopting work-family provisions. Today the company still strives to be flexible in meeting the diverse needs and family situations of employees.

In general, one can conclude that PMC Canada's response to the work and family issue has been adequate. Although it is not a leader in the area of work-family provisions, the company's family-friendly benefits are consistent with or better than the average within the pharmaceutical industry. Unions and employees appear to be generally satisfied with current provisions.

In comparison to more progressive organizations, however, PMC Canada has room for improvement in three key areas. First, PMC Canada has not done a survey of employee needs with respect to work-family benefits. If an organization is to have a benefits program that actually 'benefits' employees, a comprehensive survey of their needs must be conducted. The results can be used to target benefits appropriately.

Second, a work-family committee or task force could be established to carry out the survey and champion work-family initiatives, thereby bringing the work-family issue to the forefront at PMC Canada. A special task force would demonstrate to employees that the organization is indeed committed to helping workers balance their work and family roles. It could also provide statistics concerning program use by employees, and information about funding allocation for the various programs, and it could develop a way to measure the effectiveness of work-family provisions. Currently, this information is difficult to obtain because statistics are kept only on an informal basis, clear funding guidelines for work-family programs are limited, and no means of measuring program effectiveness exists. If an entire task force is not a feasible option, the company could decide to delegate the issue of work and family to an HR representative. Either strategy would provide workers with a way to express their concerns and desires surrounding the issue.

Third, improvements need to be made in the company's benefits packages. PMC Canada currently offers a standard benefits package with no room for flexibility, but it has recognized the need for change and plans to implement a flexible package in the near future. The goal is to formalize many of the accommodating practices that are now administered on an ad hoc basis; formal policy will be communicated in writing to employees so that they can take better advantage of the various provisions.

Overall, PMC Canada should be commended for valuing individual differences. The organization promotes diversity and helps to accommodate individual situations. The company offers several provisions that help employees to balance their work and family roles; it genuinely cares about its employees and makes the necessary link between employee satisfaction and organizational commitment.

General Conclusions

As we have seen, demographic shifts and the entry of an unprecedented number of women into the paid labour force, and an increase in dual-earner families, single-parent families, and other work-family arrangements have all created a work force in which many Canadian workers must carry the double burden of work and family roles. The workers most affected by these changes are women.

At the same time that workers need assistance to reduce the stress involved in their dual roles, organizations are faced with increased competition and a rapidly changing economy. As a result of technological advances, global competition, and the recent recession many organizations will have to rely on a committed and dedicated work force to improve productivity and gain a competitive advantage. Unfortunately many Canadian organizations are only beginning to realize that they must invest in their human resources and respond, specifically, to workers' needs with respect to work and family. Many organizations cannot see past the initial costs involved and view work-family programs as an expense rather than an investment.

Organizations can take three main approaches to accommodate workers with families. The first and most progressive approach is to devote a large amount of time and money to the research, development, and administration of work and family programs and policies. Organizations that follow this approach spend a great deal of time researching the needs of their employee population and take steps to accommodate them. Programs are continually updated, and family is at the top of the benefits agenda. Often these organizations have a specific work-family division or a task force that is responsible for developing, updating, and administering policy.

The second approach is to implement *some* family-friendly provisions. Various strategies, from establishing minimal written policies to implementing a broad range of provisions, may be followed. Organizations that take this approach often do so to keep up with competition within their industry, and they usually do not have a special work-family division or special task force for the issue. In many cases, work-family programs and policies are administered on an ad hoc basis, or they are rolled in with other benefits. The work-family issue is therefore not high on the corporate agenda, and work-family initiatives take place in a very slow, incremental fashion. Up-to-date surveys of worker needs are seldom done. These organizations often attempt to meet employee demands for family-friendly provisions, but they do not strive to set a precedent or to be leaders in the area of work and family.

The third organizational response is to devote very little organizational attention to work-family issues. Some organizations believe that special provisions should not be developed for workers who need to balance work and family, because it is the worker's decision to work and therefore it is the worker's responsibility to make scheduling adjustments and family arrangements.

PMC Canada, whose policies have been studied here, does recognize an organizational role in helping workers with work-family issues. The company takes the second approach outlined above. It values diversity among employees and attempts to cater to the different

Organizations view work-family programs as an expense rather than an investment.

Problems of the double burden of work and family are becoming more important in the workplace.

situations of its employees. PMC Canada offers several work-family benefits and provisions, which help to create a supportive organizational climate. Nevertheless, there is no clear work-family vision or initiative. PMC Canada is currently reviewing its strategy and looking at ways to improve benefits for its employees.

To conclude, problems of the double burden of work and family are becoming more important in the workplace as the Canadian work force continues to change and more workers must face the responsibility both for paid work outside the home and for unpaid work within the home. Canadian organizations must realize that if they are to have a committed, productive work force, they will have to implement policies that help workers deal with the stress that inevitably results from balancing work and family roles.

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