



Guild seeks a better work-life balance at TVO/TFO

One of the greatest obstacles to balancing life at work and outside of work is job demands. In terms of workplace challenges, Health Canada has identified "time pressures and deadlines, long hours, unclear or conflicting duties, having too much responsibility, or work that is too tiring or boring."

Sound familiar? An important goal for the Guild in this round of bargaining at TVO/TFO is to achieve a better work-life balance for our members. It's clear from our surveys that many people are stressed, overworked and in need of time to regenerate.

Several recent Canadian studies have made the link between the conflicting demands of work and home and high levels of stress. A majority of Canadian workers rate balancing work and family as more important than any other employment factor, including job satisfaction.

So what is work-life balance, anyway?

Simply put, it's about people having a measure of control over when, where and how they work, so that they can enjoy an optimal quality of life. Work-life balance is achieved by respecting a person's right to a fulfilled life inside and outside of paid work. And it pays off not only for the individual but also for employers and society in general.

When companies first started to consider work-life issues in the 1980s and 1990s, there was a sense that it was something employers should do, although at the time there was no strong data to back it up. Now there is. Over the past decade, many research studies have supported claims that work-life policies reduce absenteeism, improve productivity and make it easier to attract and retain good staff.

Work-life balance initiatives are broad and varied - they include any benefits, policies or programs that help create a better balance between the demands of the job and the

healthy management and enjoyment of life outside work.

Many collective agreements now include a host of provisions to enable employees to achieve a work-life balance, such as those related to:

- the work environment
- workload
- scheduling, breaks, meals, overtime, etc
- staffing levels
- job security
- the non-permanent workforce
- flexible work arrangements (job-sharing, part-time, work at home, etc)
- training & performance management
- all types of leave
- vacation & holidays
- disability management & wellness
- health & safety
- daycare & eldercare
- health care benefits

Some provisions already exist in the CMG-TVOntario agreement for helping employees achieve a better balance between work and life. But barriers exist that prevent employees from getting the full benefit of those provisions.

Reduced staff, greater demands, outside financial pressures and a long-hours culture make it difficult for an employee to consider, for example, working a reduced work week. In a workplace that focuses on hours worked, bodies in seats and "face time", productivity is often confused with long hours. But making long hours the norm isn't compatible with health, well-being or work-life balance.

In this round of negotiations, the CMG Bargaining team will present proposals that allow for greater flexibility and increased control by members over their work. And we will look for meaningful ways for people get their issues resolved. (continued....)



Work-life balance cont'd...

We will propose:

- improved leave provisions, allowing employees to juggle family responsibilities with work demands
- more flexibility in pursuing career paths that allow employees to progress at a pace that makes sense according to their personal values and life situations and that provide alternative ways of contributing to the organization
- a reduced emphasis on the long-hours culture and related pressures and demands
- more access to alternative work arrangements such as work at home, reduced work weeks and job-sharing
- the implementation of a wellness program aimed at preventing stress and burnout
- an increase in the control employees have over their work by involving them in proposed changes to their work methods and practices
- an examination of employee workloads

A balance between work and life outside of work is essential. According to Human Resources and Social Development Canada, "when employees are 'out of balance', they experience stress and fatigue and tend to be absent from work more often due to these reasons. They have less focus while at work because they are worried about issues at home and they are also more distracted at home because work matters weigh on their minds. The end result is that neither situation is healthy or productive; in the short, it's a lose/lose situation for employees, their families and their employer."

We expect the employer to talk a lot about its need for flexibility to be competitive and to provide viewers with better services. Employees also want flexibility - the flexibility to be able to balance their lives and do their jobs well. Work-life initiatives can create a culture that can achieve both goals.

Links to more information on work-life balance:

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety - www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/worklife_balance.html

Watson Wyatt - "Staying @ Work Study (September 2000)"
<http://www.watsonwyatt.com/news/press.asp?ID=6980>

AON - "Canada at Work 2000"
http://www.aon.com/about/publications/work/atwork_canada2000.jsp

Trades Union Congress - Changing Times
www.tuc.org.uk/theme/index.cfm?theme=changingtimes&startrow=1&endrow=3

Employers for Work-Life Balance, UK
www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk

This is the second in a series of discussion papers designed to encourage discussion among Guild members on key workplace issues. We welcome your thoughts and ideas. Contact Guild senior staff representative Dan Oldfield (dan@cmg.ca) at 416-591-5333 or TVO Branch president Carol Burtin Fripp.

<http://www.cmg.ca/tvobranchhome.asp>