

# **Innovation and Change in Labour Organizations in Canada: Results of the National 2000-2001 HRDC Survey**

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The materials presented in this report are the result of a research partnership on innovation and change in labour organizations between the Workplace Information Directorate of Human Resources Development Canada and Professors Pradeep Kumar and Gregor Murray. The views expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

## **Overview**

### ***What was the purpose of this survey?***

To develop a portrait of innovation and change in the goals, strategies, policies and practices of labour organizations in Canada.

### ***Who did the survey and who supported it?***

A research partnership between the Workplace Information Directorate of Human Resources Development Canada and university researchers at the School of Industrial Relations, Queen's University in Kingston and the School of Industrial Relations, Université de Montréal. It has also benefited from extensive input from senior officers and staff in the major labour organizations and federations in Canada who supported this survey and its objectives.

### ***Who received the survey, who filled it out and is it representative?***

The 205 central/national offices of all national and international unions in Canada with more than 500 members received the survey. It was filled out by one of the chief executive officers or a staff person who works with those officers able to give an accurate overview of the basic activities and changes in their union over the previous three years. The questionnaire was completed by 120 of the targeted unions for an overall response rate of 58.5 per cent. These 120 unions represent 2,932,592 union members, which is 76.5 per cent of the targeted population of union members in Canada. As such, we can have a high degree of confidence that these results present a fairly accurate portrait of larger trends in organizational innovation in unions.

### ***What is the objective of this survey and the major issues covered?***

The objective, shared by the labour organizations that have endorsed it, is to provide a data base to promote a better understanding of union responses to a changing environment. This summary of the results is being sent to all of the unions that participated in the survey so that each participating union organization might compare its own changes with those of other labour organizations and better identify some of the obstacles to innovations in its structures, practices and policies. The researchers will also present an analysis of the results to major union groupings. We are very grateful to a large number of unions in Canada for the time that they shared in order to fill out the survey. The survey covers a wide range of union activities including goals and priorities, organizational structures and membership servicing, the overall union environment and its impact on union actions, bargaining priorities and success and organizational innovations in servicing, structures, recruitment and finances. Subsequent phases of the research will look at regional and local union innovation.

### ***Confidentiality***

All responses remain anonymous and the results are presented in aggregate form. Individual organizations are not to be identified and only the university researchers have access to individual questionnaires in order to compile and analyze the results.

### ***Further Information***

In addition to this summary report, the researchers have prepared a series of articles in the Workplace Gazette (Autumn and Winter 2001) <http://labour-travail.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/doc/wid-dimt/eng> published by the Workplace Information Directorate, Place du Portage, Phase II, 165 Hotel de Ville, Hull, Quebec, K1A 0J2. The authors can be reached at [kumarp@post.queensu.ca](mailto:kumarp@post.queensu.ca) and [gregor.murray@umontreal.ca](mailto:gregor.murray@umontreal.ca) . Please circulate this report within your union!

# Innovation and Change in Labour Organizations in Canada: Results of the National 2000-2001 HRDC Survey

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# **I. Overview and Portrait of Participating Unions**

## **A. Nature and Objectives of Survey and Survey Population**

In order to obtain a portrait of innovation and change in the goals, strategies, policies and practices of labour organizations in Canada, Professors Pradeep Kumar (Queen's University) and Gregor Murray (Université de Montréal) have worked in collaboration with Human Resources Development Canada's Workplace Information Directorate and the major union organizations in Canada to design and administer a survey of national and international unions. The objective is to provide a better understanding of union responses to a changing environment.

The survey population (n=205) consisted of national and international unions located in Canada, as identified through the Workplace Information Directorate's database of the Directory of Labour Organizations. The unions selected reportedly had 500 or more members and independent locals with more than 500 members were excluded from the population in order to provide a more homogeneous population of union organizations involved in organizing, servicing and strategizing for more than one workplace. The survey questionnaire was sent to the chief executive officer of the central or national office of each union with the request that it be completed by one of the chief executive officers or a staff person who works closely with those officers. A separate survey was conducted of the major regional offices of unions with more than 25,000 members but those results will be the subject of separate analysis.

The main survey period was over the winter and spring of 2000-2001 and responses were not processed beyond the beginning of June 2001. Multiple contacts with the organizations were initiated in order to promote their participation in the survey. Not only did the survey benefit from extensive cooperation from people throughout the labour movement, but there was tremendous interest expressed in the themes covered by the survey.

The typical respondent was a senior official or staff person in each union who had an intimate knowledge of his or her union's policies and practices. The responses were meant to translate the realities of specific union organizations, for example a provincially based teachers' or nurses' union, or a national general union covering a variety of sectors or a smaller, more geographically focused, occupational or industry union. Respondents were generally asked to describe the situation as it applies to the whole of their union. However, for questions concerned with the bargaining environment, bargaining priorities and degree of success, respondents were asked to identify their major concentration of membership in a particular industry and to respond for that group.

Given the tremendous cooperation offered by people throughout the union movement, we received 120 valid responses (n=120) from the 205 targeted unions, for an overall response rate of 58.5 per cent. In terms of the membership of the union population under investigation, the unions participating in the survey represent just under 3 million members (2,932,592) of the 3.835 million members in the 205 targeted unions for a total coverage of 76.5 per cent of targeted members. Thus, we can be quite confident that the responses in this survey are fairly representative of the Canadian union movement as a whole. Comparatively speaking, this remarkably high response rate certainly offers one of the most comprehensive portraits available of current union structures, priorities and trends in Canada.

The survey covered a wide range of union activities including goals and priorities, organizational structures and membership servicing, the overall union environment and its impact on union actions, bargaining priorities and success and organizational innovations in servicing, structures, recruitment and finances. We provide here a preliminary and descriptive overview of some of the main results.

The reader should be aware that this is a quantitative survey, which attempts to measure the extent of change in union policies, priorities and practise. As such, it cannot adequately highlight many of the most innovative experiences in unions in Canada. Nor can it fully explain the way that the change process takes place in different unions. This is something that the researchers plan to do in subsequent phases of the research. However, as presented to us by key observers in each union, this initial overview of the survey results does give a comprehensive overview, of the degree of the diffusion of different practices within union organizations in Canada and the degree of change experienced over recent years. Subsequent analysis will permit us to delve more deeply into some of the factors that appear to drive the change process and to examine the way that certain types of changes tend to be bundled together.

## **B. Portrait of the Participating Unions**

In terms of sectoral distribution, roughly seven out of ten participating unions have their members primarily in the public sector and three out of ten mainly in the private sector. The public sector unions represent approximately 66.5 per cent of union members covered in the survey.

The participating unions reported membership in all provinces and territories, ranging from just over 1 million members in Ontario and 720,691 in Quebec to 16,100 in the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Slightly more than three out of ten unions (31.9 per cent) indicated that they had at least some members that worked in a federal jurisdiction for a total of 357,078 members. The other members (more than 2.5 million) work in provincial jurisdictions.

Of the 120 unions participating in the survey, 101 reported their membership by gender. The total number of women members covered by the survey was over one million (1,194,558), nearly two-thirds of all women union members in Canada. The number of members in the individual unions ranged from a low of one member to a high of 260,000 members.

In terms of the distribution of the unions by number of members, just 10 per cent had a membership of less than 1,000, more than one half of the surveyed unions (61 of the 120) had a membership of between 1,000-9,999, 18 per cent of the participating unions were in 10,000-29,999 size category, 11 per cent had a membership between 30,000 and 49,999, and 10 per cent reported a membership of 50,000 and over. The response rate was directly proportional to the size of the union, from less than 50 per cent for unions with under 1,000 members, to 55 per cent for unions with of 1,000 to 9,999 members and to 68.1 per cent for unions with 10,000 or more members. Although there is a slight bias towards union organizations of a larger size, we can be confident that the survey results are based on an accurate representation of the wide variety of unions that make up the Canadian labour movement.

Participating unions were asked to report their current membership by sector and how it has changed over the last decade. While this can only be an approximate portrait, current membership of the respondent unions is distributed as follows: 18.5 per cent in goods production, 15.8 per cent in private services, 57.4 per cent in direct public services and 8.3 per cent in indirect public services. Compared to a decade ago, the primary changes in membership composition of the participating unions are in goods production (28.9 per cent of members ten years ago) and private services (4.6 per cent of reported members ten years ago) whereas direct public services (60.7 per cent of members ten years ago) and indirect public services (5.8 per cent of members ten years ago) have remained relatively stable over that same period. To summarize, the unions participating in this survey have experienced a relative and absolute decline in their percentage membership composition in goods production (minus 13.1 percentage points) but this loss has been compensated by gains in private services membership (plus 11.2 percentage points).

***The unions participating in this survey have experienced a decline in their membership in goods production but this loss has been compensated by gains in private services membership.***

Although only three out of 10 unions (29.1 per cent) were able to estimate the number of their members who are visible minorities, these unions reported just under 200,000 visible minority members.

Unions were asked to detail the relative importance of different types of local structures. There is clearly a wide variety of operative organizational principles: 33 per cent of unions report that their members are only organized in single bargaining or certification unit locals, 11 per cent only organize multiple bargaining or certification unit locals such as composite or amalgamated locals, and 33 per cent of unions indicate that their members are organized in both types of structure. A further 12.6 per cent of unions report that they organize their members in some other kind of local structure.

What is the portrait of new organizing activity reported by the participating units over the last three years (1997, 1998 and 1999)? Respondents were asked to detail the sectoral distribution of their newly organized certification/bargaining units over this period. The unions participating in the survey indicated that they organized 2,399 new units covering a total of 190,051 members during this period.

***One of the key drivers in recent union organizing is the attempt to keep pace with the restructuring of the public sector.***

In terms of the distribution of the number of members organized, 21.2 per cent were in goods producing, 22.4 per cent were in private services, 16.6 per cent in direct public services and 39.9 per cent in indirect public services. While considerable new organizing is taking place, it would seem readily apparent that the extent of organizing in private services does not reflect the huge concentration of non-unionized workplaces in this sector. Moreover, the extent of organizing in indirect public services is quite remarkable – the single largest concentration of members. This seems to suggest that one of the key drivers in recent union organizing is the attempt to keep pace with the restructuring of the public sector.

## II. Organizational Goals, Characteristics and Structures

### A. Goals

Unions were asked to respond to a series of questions concerning their organizational cultures and philosophies. What can generally be described as social unionism appears to be an important motivating philosophy for unions in Canada. This can be seen in the extent to which union respondents identify with different types of actions and priorities ranging from political action, to building coalitions and educating their membership.

***Social unionism appears to be an important motivating philosophy for unions in Canada.***

Political action is clearly a very important dimension of Canadian union activity but this does not necessarily translate into support for particular political parties. For example, 65.0 per cent of union respondents either strongly agree or agree that their union engages in political action to change public policy and bring about social and economic change, only 17.5 per cent indicate that their union does not engage in such action and a further 17.5 per cent neither agree, nor disagree. However, when asked if their union supports a political party to protect and advance the interests of its members, only 15 per cent agree or strongly agree with this statement whereas 69.2 per cent disagree or strongly disagree and 15.8 per cent neither agree nor disagree.

***Political action is a very important dimension of Canadian union activity but not necessarily support for particular political parties.***

As for their tendency to reach out to community and social groups in order to build coalitions with what has come to be known as the “civil society”, 47.5 per cent of unions agree or strongly agree that they work in coalition with community groups to pursue their goals and a further 33.7 per cent agree or strongly agree that they work in coalition with women’s groups. At the opposite end of this spectrum, 31.2 per cent of unions indicate that they do not work in coalition with women’s groups and 23.3 per cent that they do not work in coalition with community groups. Other forms of community involvement also concern the relative importance of welfare and charity activities: 45 per cent of union respondents indicate that such activities are very important for their union, whereas 22.5 per cent disagree that such activities are important. In order that their organizations reflect better the sexual and racial composition of Canadian society as a whole, the promotion of gender and racial equality also appears to be a significant goal. As regards such policies, 66.6 per cent of respondents indicate that their union has taken specific action to promote racial and gender equality; only 9.2 per cent of union respondents disagree that their union has taken specific action on this front and a further 24.2 per cent neither agree nor disagree that their union has sought to promote racial and gender equality.

***66.6 per cent of respondents indicate that their union has taken specific action to promote racial and gender equality.***

Another important dimension of social unionism concerns the degree to which unions seek to promote and encourage membership participation in their union. Half of unions in Canada (50 per cent) either agree or strongly agree that promoting members' understanding of union history, goals and activities is a high priority in their union; 25.4 per cent of unions disagree that this is a high priority and 24.6 per cent neither agree nor disagree that this is a high priority. Similarly, 50.4 per cent of union respondents agree or strongly agree that member education and organizing in their union is just as important as collective bargaining; 21 per cent disagree that this is the case and 28.6 per cent neither agree nor disagree.

To what degree do unions in Canada seek to construct broader forms of solidarity as opposed to the particular goals associated with the profession or industry of their main membership groupings? Many union leaders certainly feel that they play a role for all workers and not just for their members. Half of union respondents either agree or strongly agree that advancing the interests of all workers is as important as representing current members in their union;

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23.3 per cent disagree or strongly disagree that this is the case and 26.7 per cent neither agree nor disagree. Unions in Canada are fairly divided as regards the relative importance of solidarity in the labour movement as a whole, as opposed to the promotion of their union's particular policies. When asked if promoting solidarity between different unions in the wider labour movement is as important as promoting their unions' particular policies, 38.3 per cent of respondents either agree or strongly agree that this is the case, 30 per cent either disagree or strongly disagree and 31.7 per cent neither agree nor disagree.

In the context of globalization, the construction of forms of international solidarity between unions in different countries is likely to be increasingly important. To what degree are unions in Canada engaged in such forms of solidarity? Keeping in mind that international unions with members in both Canada and the United States are naturally involved in some forms of cross-border coordination, respondents were asked to what degree unions in Canada are involved in solidarity work with unions outside of Canada and the United States? Almost half of unions in Canada (48.3 per cent) agree or strongly agree that they are involved in such work, whereas 34.1 per cent disagree or strongly disagree and 17.5 per cent neither agree nor disagree. As for actual cross-border coordination with other unions to pursue their goals, be it with unions in the United States or beyond, 44.1 per cent of unions in Canada agree or strongly agree that their union is engaged in cross-border coordination activity with other unions to pursue its goals, 33.3 per cent disagree or strongly disagree that this is the case and 22.5 per cent neither agree nor disagree.

For some, the so-called new industrial relations imply greater cooperation between unions and employers. To what degree can we discern such a trend among the major Canadian unions? It appears that the evidence is quite mixed. In terms of a trend towards increased workplace cooperation, 39.8 per cent of union respondents agree or strongly agree that their union cooperates with employers in order to secure new investment and promote workplace modernization, whereas 22.9 per cent disagree

***Just under half report that their union is engaged in cross-border coordination activity with other unions to pursue its goals.***

that this is the case and 37.3 per cent neither agree nor disagree. The high proportion in this latter category would tend to suggest that it is naturally difficult for some union respondents to generalize the varied experiences of particular workplaces to their union as a whole. Another indicator of a more proactive approach to workplace change is the use of worker investment funds such as the Fonds de solidarité, Fondation, Working Ventures, etc. When asked if their union promotes the use of such funds in order to encourage new employment opportunities, 37.9 of respondents agree or strongly agree that this is the case and 37 per cent disagree or strongly disagree, while 25.2 per cent neither agree nor disagree. Another form of engagement with the employer concerns the spread of bipartite and tripartite industry committees with employers and governments on issues such as training and industry development. When asked if their union is involved with such committees, 51.3 per cent of respondents agree or strongly agree that this is the case, 32.8 per cent disagree or strongly disagree and 16 per cent neither agree nor disagree.

## **B. Organizational Characteristics**

The participating unions report a total of 467 full-time elected or executive officials at the top level of their union in Canada, of which 31.5 per cent are women and 4.5 per cent are visible minorities. The average number of full-time elected or executive officials per union is four.

In addition to the full-time elected or executive officials, the unions report just under 1,000 executive members, of which 35 per cent are women and five per cent are visible minorities. The average size of a union executive is between eight and nine members with a median of six members.

The unions reported a total of 7,818 direct union employees in Canada. Of this number, approximately 42.7 per cent are general servicing staff working on negotiations and contract administration, 14.7 per cent are organizing and recruitment staff, 10.2 per cent are engaged in specialist servicing such as research, education and public relations, and 30.1 per cent are administrative and clerical staff. Union staff is typically concentrated in the head office as unions report that approximately 71 per cent of their staff work in the main or head office of their union in Canada. Of course, this figure is very sensitive to size so that it is 88 per cent in unions less than 2,600 members and 57.5 per cent in unions with more than 12,500 members.

Union dues are generally calculated as a percentage of either earnings (44.4 per cent) or wage rates (23.1 per cent). Only 25.9 per cent of unions collect dues on the basis of a flat rate. In 24.4 per cent of unions, members are also likely to make a separate contribution for special services such as a strike fund.

In terms of general revenues and expenditure for the most recent budgetary year, the participating unions reported income of 733 million dollars, of which 90.5 per cent came from direct dues revenue from their members. These same unions spent somewhat less than they gathered in revenues : 712 million dollars in expenditure.

***90.5 per cent of union revenues come directly from membership dues.***

## **C. Structures and Servicing**

Almost all unions (96.6 per cent) have a constitutional convention or assembly; 62.9 per cent report delegate structures at national level, 72.3 per cent at provincial level and 36.1 per cent at industry level and 37 per cent on an occupational basis. On average, these latter delegate structures meet between three and five times a year.

The survey also sought to characterize who does what within a labour organization according to the type of activity. National and international union staff appear to play a predominant role in organizing and recruiting members in new units (45.2 per cent of unions assign them primary responsibility on this matter), offering union education and training courses (49.6 per cent) and undertaking research and legislative support (49.6 per cent). The responsibility for bargaining is more equally divided between, on the one hand, national and international staff (44.3 per cent) and, on the other hand, local union staff and officials (40.9 per cent). Primary responsibility for contract administration shifts to local union officers and staff (53.1 per cent) as opposed to national and international staff (31.9 per cent). Unions are most likely to have recourse to outside specialists, such as lawyers and consultants, in the case of grievance arbitration (25.2 per cent) and workers' compensation claims (22.5 per cent), but almost never (one per cent) for recruiting, bargaining and contract administration.

### III. Organizational Environment and Priorities

#### A. Environment

Unions were asked to describe the nature of their current overall environment for each of their major activities. For bargaining and renegotiating contracts, 38.4 per cent of the respondents described the environment as favourable or highly favourable, 32.5 per cent termed it as unfavourable or highly unfavourable while 29.2 per cent expressed the opinion that it was neither favourable nor unfavourable.

The environment for organizing/recruiting new members was described as favourable or highly favourably by 29.6 per cent of respondents, unfavourable or highly unfavourable by 25.2 per cent of the respondents and neither favourable nor unfavourable by 45.2 per cent of respondents.

In the case of servicing members, nearly two-thirds of respondents (65.5) described the current environment as highly favourable or favourable, 5.9 per cent believed it was unfavourable and 28.6 per cent termed the environment neither favourable nor unfavourable.

The environment for undertaking political action was also described as favourable or highly favourable by 44.4 per cent of respondents, unfavourable or highly unfavourable by 28.2 per cent of respondents and neither favourable nor unfavourable by 27.4 per cent of respondents. Similarly 35.9 per cent of respondents considered the current environment for undertaking community action as favourable or highly favourable, 12.9 per cent described it as unfavourable or highly unfavourable, and 51.3 per cent termed it as neither favourable nor unfavourable.

In summary, unions in Canada are facing a mixed environment for their activities: quite favourable for some unions and rather unfavourable for others.

How has the current environment affected unions over the past three years? It appears that the current environment has most profoundly impacted the servicing function of unions. More than three-fourths (77.5 per cent) of respondents indicated that the demand for union services from their membership has increased significantly or moderately. Only 22.5 per cent replied that it has remained the same. Similarly 88.3 per cent of respondents stated that the servicing load on their full-time staff has increased moderately or significantly. Only 10.8 per cent responded that servicing load has stayed the same.

***More than three-quarters of respondents indicated that the demand for union services from their membership and the servicing load on their staff have increased.***

Nearly one-third to one-half of respondents also reported that their relative bargaining power (42.8 per cent), level of membership involvement/participation (32.5 per cent), worker satisfaction with union services (37.9 per cent), interest of the non-unionized in joining the union (32.7 per cent) and the public support for union have increased moderately or significantly. Less than one-quarter (23.5 per cent) indicated that their union's relative bargaining power has decreased while 33.6 per cent believed that it has stayed about the same over the past three years. In the case of level of membership

involvement/participation, slightly over one-quarter (25.9 per cent) of respondents reported that it has declined and one-third (33.6 per cent) said that it has remained the same. A majority of respondents were of the opinion that worker satisfaction with union services (52.1 per cent), the interest of the non-unionized in joining the union (59.1 per cent) and public support for their union (60.5 per cent) has also stayed the same over the past three years. Very few respondents, less than 10 per cent, reported either moderate or significant decline in these indicators.

## **B. Priorities**

Unions were asked to indicate the level of priority they attach to ten key union goals and objectives in the current environment on a five point scale from the least important to the most important. (Thus, unions could indicate that several items were at the highest level of priority.) The survey revealed that improving wages and benefits was the issue to which the largest number of unions attached the highest level of priority. It was the item of highest priority for 61.7 per cent of respondents and the next highest for 32.5 per cent respondents. Improving job security was another item of high priority with highest level of priority for 40.3 per cent respondents and next highest for 34.5 per cent respondents. Promoting rank and file activism was the third most common important item of priority for unions: 15 per cent of respondents attach the highest priority and 48.3 per cent attach the next highest priority to this item. Other items of high priority, where a majority or close to a majority of respondents indicated that they were either the items of highest or next highest level of priority (4 or 5 on a scale of five) included organizing and recruiting new members (53.4 per cent), promoting worker participation in decision-making (50.0 per cent), promoting employment opportunities (49.1 per cent), and undertaking political action to change public policy (47.1 per cent). Nearly one-third of union respondents indicated that they also attach high priority to building alliances with other unions (38.3 per cent), attracting new types of workers (e.g. the young, women, and visible minorities) to their union (33.6 per cent), and reducing working time (32.5 per cent). Coalition-building with social groups was described as an issue of high priority by only one-quarter (25.0 per cent) of respondents. One-fifth to nearly one-third of respondents indicated that building alliances with other unions (20 per cent), undertaking political action (20.5 per cent) coalition-building (33.4 per cent), reducing work time (31.7 per cent) and attracting new types of workers to their unions were items of low priority (one to two on a scale of five from least important to most important) for their union. Very few unions, less than 10 per cent of the respondents, described wages and benefit improvement, job security, promoting rank and file activism and worker participation in workplace decision-making as items of low priority.

***The highest priorities among the overall goals and objectives of unions in Canada are improving wages and benefits, improving job security and promoting rank and file activism.***

Survey respondents were further asked whether they had experienced a change in the degree of priority for these different items over the past three years. More specifically, they were asked whether the level of priority attached to various issues has moderately or significantly decreased, increased, or stayed about the same. According to the survey results, except for two items – organizing and

***Two issues are identified as having the highest increase in the level of priority: organizing and rank and file activism.***

recruiting new members, and promoting rank and file activism – the level of organizational priorities attached to various items has remained stable for a majority of unions. In the case of both organizing and the promotion of rank and file activism – both items of high priority – nearly one-half of the respondents (from 47 to 49 per cent) indicated that the level of priority attached has increased moderately or significantly. Over two-fifths (40-43 per cent) of respondents also reported an increase in the level of priority attached to improving wages and benefits, job security, political action to change public policy and promoting worker participation in workplace decision-making. Over one-quarter to one-third of respondents also indicated an increase in level of priority attached to promotion of employment opportunities (27.7 per cent), building alliances with other unions (33.0 per cent), reducing working time (22.8 per cent) and attracting new types of workers (28.7 per cent). Only a handful of unions (less than 10 per cent) reported a decrease in the level of priority attached to any of the items identified above. In other words, union observers are more likely to report the need to increase the level of priority attached to a wide variety of items.

## IV. Bargaining Environment, Priorities and Degree of Success

The survey asked unions to describe in detail the nature and scope of the changes in bargaining environment, bargaining priorities, and the degree of success they have achieved in their bargaining objectives in the major industry or sector in which their members are concentrated during the last bargaining round.

The survey responses covered a diverse range of industries in both public and private sectors; from grain handling and agri-business to manufacturing, construction, transportation, communications, utilities, trade, and private and public services including health, education and public administration. The responses related to a total of 8,797 bargaining units of varying sizes from 2 to 48,000 and covering over two million workers, over one-half of workers covered by collective agreements in Canada. A majority (52.7 per cent) of the sectors for which responses were provided involved more than one bargaining unit. The estimated average union density in the sectors was 81.9 per cent, ranging between eight and 100 per cent.

### A. Bargaining Environment Specifics

Respondents were asked to indicate specific trends over the last three years for their aspects of their industry bargaining environment.

#### *Union Representation*

Two-fifths (40.8 per cent) of respondents reported an increase in the overall level of employment in their industry. Over one-third (38.2 per cent) reported moderate to significant decreases. More than one-fifth (21.2 per cent) responded that overall employment stayed the same during the past three years.

***Just under half of respondents report an increase in the overall level of employment in their major industry over the past three years.***

As for the number of workers represented in their major industry, 45.3 per cent reported an increase, 24.0 per cent experienced a decline and 30.8 per cent reported no change.

Similarly, 23.3 per cent indicated an increase in union density in their major industry, 70.3 per cent reported that it had stayed the same and only 5.4 per cent experienced a moderate decline.

#### *Competitive Environment and Change*

A majority (54.6 per cent) reported modest to significant increases in the degree of domestic or international competition in their industry. Over two-fifths (41.6 per cent) believed that there has been no change.

More than four-fifths (83.5 per cent) reported an increase in the pace of technological change while 15.5 per cent indicated that the pace of change had remained the same. Similarly nearly four-fifths (78.2 per cent) stated that the extent of industrial/organizational restructuring has increased; 18.2 per cent believed that there has been no change.

***Most unions report an increase in the pace of technological change and the extent of industrial and organizational restructuring.***

A decrease in the extent of government spending in their major industry was reported by 45.2 per cent of the respondents, while 27.9 per cent believed that it had increased and 26.9 per cent indicated that the spending was unchanged. Similarly, while a majority (50.0 per cent) of respondents stated that government regulation of the industry showed no change over the past three years, 27.6 per cent reported an increase and 22.4 per cent a decrease.

### *Management Strategies*

Over three-fourths of respondents reported modest to significant increases in management emphasis on cost reduction. Nearly one-half further indicated an increase in downsizing/layoffs (45.5 per cent), level of outsourcing and contracting out (47.5 per cent) and the extent of closures/mergers/amalgamations (60.2 per cent). Two-fifths of respondents also reported an increase in the degree of privatization, although a majority (56.8 per cent) believed that it has stayed the same over the past three years.

***Most report increased management emphasis on cost reduction.***

### *Work Environment*

An overwhelming majority (86.6 per cent) of respondents reported modest to significant increases in workload or the pace of work for workers in their major industry. Almost one-half (46.7 per cent) also reported an increase in health and safety risks. On the other hand, a majority also stated that health and safety risks (50.8 per cent) as well as level of job security (52.9 per cent), promotional/advancement opportunities (63.4 per cent), worker access to training and retraining (48.7 per cent) and the degree of worker influence over the job (59 per cent) had remained unchanged over the past three years.

***An overwhelming majority reported increases in the workload or the pace of work of their members.***

### *Workplace Practices*

Survey results suggests that unions continue to face increasing efforts by employers to change the organization of work.

A vast majority of unions reported an increase in multi-skilling/multi-tasking (68.4 per cent), and the use of part-time/contract/temporary workers (64.2 per cent).

More than one-half of unions surveyed indicated that there has been no change in such workplace practices as job rotation/cross-training (61.2 per cent), quality improvement (Kaizen, Quality Circles etc.) groups (64.8 per cent), team working/group-based work systems (53.9 per cent), quality certification like the ISO and QS (54.4 per cent), variable payment systems (69.1 per cent), incidence of information sharing (54.6 per cent), consultation/communication over work place issues (52.2 per cent), employer initiatives for cooperation over workplace change (54.8 per cent) and direct employer communication with members rather than through the union (59.1 per cent). However, nearly one-third or more reported an increase in the extent of job rotation (34.9 per cent), quality certification (37.9 per cent), and direct communication with workers by employers (34.0 per cent). Very few, less than one-fourth, of unions indicated a decline in the use of these practices.

***A vast majority reported an increase in multi-skilling/multi-tasking and the use of part-time, contract and temporary workers.***

### *Bargaining/Labour-Management Relationships*

Survey results reveal a mixed pattern of both stability and adverse change in bargaining/labour-management relationships, over the past three years.

***Labour relations have been characterized by both a high degree of stability and a greater degree of conflict over the past years.***

While nearly two-fifths to one-half of union respondents reported modest or significant increases in employer demands for concessions in wages and benefits (42.6 per cent) as well as work rules (51.5 per cent), employer bargaining power (42.0 per cent), employer attempts to undermine union credibility in the work place (36.8 per cent), union-management conflicts (38.8 per cent), and the length of time it takes to conclude a collective agreement (46.6 per cent), a similar proportion indicate no change in these indicators.

***Just under half of unions report increases in employer demands for concessions in bargaining.***

Nearly one third of respondents (32.2 per cent) reported modest to significant declines in union bargaining power. Over two-fifths (42.4 per cent) believed it has stayed the same, while one-quarter (25.4 per cent) indicated an increase in their bargaining power.

Over one-half of unions reported that union-management cooperation (52.1 per cent) and employer desire for greater union involvement in the change process (51.3 per cent) has not changed over the past three years. However, nearly one-third (30.8 per cent) believed that attempts to involve unions in the change process have increased. One-quarter of respondents indicated both an increase as well as a decrease in union-management cooperation.

More than one-half of unions surveyed reported no increase in contract duration of more than three years (55.2 per cent), coordinated bargaining between different bargaining units of the same employer (70.9 per cent), pattern agreements between different employers in the same industry (64.8 per cent) and the use of new bargaining techniques such as interest-based bargaining (54.6 per cent). However, nearly one-quarter to one-third also reported an increase in these bargaining practices.

#### *Union Practices and Relationships with their Members*

More than one-third to two-fifths of respondents reported modest to significant increases in worker trust/confidence in their union (34.4 per cent), level of membership support in contract ratification votes (43.6 per cent) and union coordination of bargaining objectives between different units in their major industry (37.3 per cent). Three-fifths (61.7 per cent) indicated no change in bargaining coordination. Almost one-half (46.2 per cent) also suggested that worker trust in their unions and level of membership support in contract ratification has stayed the same.

***Somewhat less than half of unions reported increases in worker trust or confidence in their union, the level of membership support in contract ratification votes and union coordination of bargaining objectives between different units in their major industry.***

## **B. Bargaining Priorities and Success**

Wages and benefits improvements continue to be the most important bargaining priority for Canadian unions, according to the survey results. Nine-tenths of the respondents cited protecting and increasing wages and benefits as a high bargaining priority. Other areas of high priority cited by survey respondents included restrictions on contracting-out/outsourcing (59.8 per cent of respondents), the control or regulation of workloads (57.8 per cent), lay-off protections (54.4 per cent) and improved pensions and early retirement provisions (61.8 per cent). Over one-third to one-half of survey respondents also mentioned the following as areas of high bargaining priority: improved training and retraining opportunities (45.7 per cent), protection against harassment (44.3 per cent), improved working hours-shift schedules (40.0 per cent), family-related leaves (39.8 per cent), an increased union role in workplace decision-making (38.8 per cent), better severance pay provisions (36.6 per cent), employment equity (35.7 per cent), technological change protections (33.9 per cent), health and safety improvements (33.9 per cent) and consultations on/advance notice of organizational change (34.2 per cent)

***Wages and benefits improvements continue to be the most important bargaining priority for Canadian unions.***

Flex-time (55.0 per cent), and day care or other childcare provisions (59.6 per cent) were areas of relatively low priority for a majority of unions.

When asked to evaluate the level of success on their bargaining priorities, protecting and increasing current wages and benefits were the two areas where a majority of unions believed they had the most success. In contrast, working-time reduction, control or regulation of atypical or precarious employment and getting access to financial information were the three areas where unions had the least bargaining success.

***Protecting and increasing current wages and benefits were the two areas where a majority of unions had the most success. Working-time reduction, control or regulation of atypical employment and getting access to financial information were the areas where unions had the least bargaining success.***

Unions were asked to identify the relative importance of various factors in explaining the degree of success in their bargaining objectives. The most important factors cited by a majority of unions included: the specific economic environment in the industry was considered important or extremely important by 69 per cent of respondents, union policy on major bargaining objectives (60.4 per cent), bargaining outcomes elsewhere in the industry (60.0 per cent), legislation or public policy (59.8 per cent), employer's financial situation (57.7 per cent), members' willingness to take action on major bargaining objectives (56.9 per cent), employer attitudes (54.2 per cent) and the union's ability to coordinate bargaining objectives between different units in the industry (51.3 per cent).

Readers should note that the results of the survey as regards bargaining priorities and degree of success and variations between public and private sectors is treated in much greater detail in Pradeep Kumar and Gregor Murray "Union Bargaining Priorities in the New Economy: Results from the 2000 HRDC Survey on Innovation and Change in Labour Organizations in Canada", *Workplace Gazette* Vol. 4, No. 4, 2001, 43-55.

### **C. Bargaining Approaches and Policies**

Unions were also asked about the significance of different bargaining approaches and policies.

An overwhelming majority of respondent (78.1 per cent) indicated that their union always or almost always uses a formal mechanism for soliciting membership views on bargaining priorities.

More than one-half (57.6 per cent) stated that their union fixes common objectives for its different bargaining units.

A majority (51.8 per cent) of unions engage in coordinated bargaining with an employer with more than one bargaining unit. However, pattern agreements with different employers in the same industry are not very common. Over one-third (38.5 per cent) always or almost always negotiate pattern agreements. A similar proportion (38.5 per cent) of respondents reported that they do not engage in pattern bargaining.

One-third (33.1 per cent) of the unions surveyed suggested that they pursue a comprehensive workplace change policy. However, over one-third (38.4 per cent) indicated that this is not the practice in their union.

A majority (54.0 per cent) of union respondents reported that their union does not negotiate collective agreements of a duration longer than three years. Over three-fourths (78.9 per cent) of respondents also indicated that they do not have a policy on the negotiation of longer-term collective agreements. Of the 24 unions that have such a policy, a majority (54.2 per cent) reported that their policy does not favour longer-term agreements. Over two-fifths (41.7 per cent) indicated that the policy is neither favourable nor unfavourable, rather the negotiation of longer-term agreements depends on the circumstances.

## V. Organizational Innovations and Change

### A. Extent of Change

Unions in Canada are undergoing a period of profound change and one of the major objectives of this survey was to gauge the range of organizational responses to this change. A first indicator of the importance of these changes is that over the last decade, 69 per cent of unions have undertaken a formal assessment of their goals, objectives, activities and performance.

In terms of the extent of changes made by their union, respondents were asked to assess their union's performance from little or no change on particular items to a very high degree of change. Unions in Canada are most likely to report a high or very high degree of change on rank and file communication (52.1 per cent), the education and training of members (49.6 per cent), the use of

***Unions in Canada are most likely to report a high degree of change on rank and file communication, the education and training of members, the use of new technologies, bargaining approaches and strategies, methods of servicing and membership participation and involvement in the union.***

new technologies (48.2 per cent), bargaining approaches and strategies (44.5 per cent), methods of servicing (44.5 per cent) and membership participation and involvement in the union (40.5 per cent). Unions were least likely to report a high or very high degree of change in their sources of revenue (only 12.9 per cent), cross-border or international coordination (16 per cent), the workplace change agenda (20.9 per cent) and patterns of expenditure (27.9 per cent).

### B. Servicing

There appears to be a fairly high degree of stability as regards the general approach to servicing in Canadian unions. One idea that is frequently mentioned in some of the union renewal literature is the need to re-allocate resources to new areas of activity by shifting the primary burden of servicing from staff to activists. However, only 16.3 per cent of respondents agree or strongly agree that their union has shifted the primary responsibility for contract administration from staff to local union stewards and/or officers and 57.2 per cent of respondents disagree or strongly disagree with this statement. Similarly, only 19.2 per cent of respondents agree or strongly agree that their union frequently draws on a substantial group of activists on paid release to carry out servicing activities such as contract administration. Indeed, only 8.5 per cent of union respondents agree or strongly agree that their union has had to cut back on general servicing because of the need to devote more resources to specialized services such as organizing, recruitment, training, education and political action.

***Only 16.3 per cent of respondents agree that their union has shifted the primary responsibility for contract administration from staff to local union stewards and/or officers.***

It is clear that the union respondents do not feel a great deal of financial pressure to effect organizational change. For example, 71.8 per cent disagree or strongly disagree that their union has had to reduce the number of staff and increase staff servicing loads because of financial constraints; only 18.8 per cent of respondents agree or strongly agree that this is the case. Similarly, only 13.7 per cent agree or strongly agree that their union has reduced the frequency of representative delegate meetings such as conventions, congresses and councils. Indeed, more than half of respondents (52.6 per cent) agree or strongly agree that their union has an accumulated surplus and properties on which it can draw to finance current expenditures and only 12.2 per cent agree or strongly agree that their union has an accumulated debt, which must be serviced from current revenues.

***Union respondents do not feel a great deal of financial pressure to effect organizational change.***

There are, however, some areas of change in the organization of servicing. Undoubtedly the most significant area of change concerns rank and file communication as 84.9 per cent of union respondents agree or strongly agree that their union has sought to increase communication with its rank and file membership. Just under one-third of unions (32.2 per cent) also report that they encourage the merger or amalgamation of locals. Moreover, 35 per cent of unions indicate that they have sought to change the composition of their staff in order to better reflect the demographics of the labour market. That said, only 17.8 per cent of respondents agree or strongly agree that their union is able to service members in languages other than English or French.

***The most significant area of change in union servicing concerns methods for rank and file communication.***

Despite the ageing of the labour force, leadership renewal does not appear to be a major worry. More than a third of union respondents (37.8 per cent) indicate that the average age of their union's leadership has increased substantially, but 29.4 per cent disagree or strongly disagree that this is the case. Moreover, more than half of the respondents (55.3 per cent) disagree or strongly disagree that their union has difficulty attracting suitable rank and file members to take staff positions. Indeed, 40.3 per cent of respondents agree or strongly agree that the emergence of a new generation of leadership in their union is increasingly apparent; only 22.7 per cent of respondents either disagree or strongly disagree with this.

***Leadership renewal does not appear to be a major worry and somewhat under half of respondents report that a new generation of leadership is increasingly apparent.***

Most unions (83.8 per cent) offer education programs or courses to train local leadership. On average, according to estimates provided by the respondents, roughly 55 000 members annually have participated in these courses over the last three years.

### C. Use of New Technologies, Services and Structures

In the information age, the use of new technologies is increasingly important. The survey asked respondents to assess the frequency of use of different techniques, ranging from never to systematically. In terms of their relative frequency, the use of websites or the internet to communicate with members (61.8 per cent either often or systematically) and the use of computer networks to

***The use of new technologies is increasingly important in unions in Canada.***

communicate between union officers, staff and activists (54.6 per cent) appear to be the technological innovations with the highest rate of diffusion. Educational conferences on special themes (45.4 per cent), surveys or polls of members (39.5 per cent), formal programs to train staff in the use of new technologies (34.4 per cent), the use of advertising in the mass media to promote campaigns (32.8 per cent) and computer data analysis to aid bargaining and/or recruitment (31.1 per cent) are among some of the other major initiatives in the area of communications and new technologies. Few unions (12.6 per cent) appear to produce videos to communicate with their members.

Some unions have sought to develop complementary services for their members: 57.1 per cent of the participating unions offer special insurance programs; 41.2 per cent legal service programs; 37.8 per cent supplementary medical or dental programs; and 28 per cent low-cost travel and/or affinity credit cards. A substantial proportion of unions (38.7 per cent) also offers the possibility for those not in a certified bargaining unit to be associate members of their union.

A number of unions have sought to improve the access of specific target groups to the life of the union. While the importance of such programs certainly varies from one union to another, to what degree can we observe the presence of specific identity structures and programs in unions in Canada? The most common manifestation of such structures are for women members (43.2 per cent of unions), retired members (31.4 per cent), young members (26.9 per cent), visible minorities (23.5 per cent), gay or lesbian members (20.2 per cent) and members with disabilities (15.1 per cent). Only 29.1 per cent of unions indicate that they are able to report the number of visible minorities who are members of their union.

### D. Organizing and Recruitment

A key aspect of the union renewal debate concerns organizing and recruitment strategies. The unions participating in this survey report a total of 242 staff working full-time on organizing and recruitment, of which 26.9 per cent are women. Less than half of unions (44.8 per cent) report the presence of a person who has overall responsibility for establishing policy and targets for organizing and recruiting new members. Less than half of unions (42 per cent) indicate that they have specific organizing or recruitment targets.

***Less than half of unions report the presence of a person who has overall responsibility for establishing policy and targets for organizing and recruiting new members.***

In terms of recruitment targets, union respondents were asked to indicate which sectors had the highest priority in current attempts by their union to organize new members. By order of relative importance, these are in the public services (45.8 per cent indicate that this is a high or very high priority), private services (30.8 per cent), newly privatized or reorganized former public services (27.2 per cent) and goods production (23.9 per cent). In other words, despite the high degree of union penetration in public services, a very high priority continues to be attached to new organizing and the consolidation of existing organizing in this sector. Not surprisingly perhaps, unions respondents also indicate that their union is likely to attach a high or very high priority to organizing in existing areas of membership concentration (59.1 per cent) and in large units (41.9 per cent) as opposed to new areas where their union has fewer members (24 per cent) and in small units (27.6 per cent). Thus, the highest priorities for the recruitment of new members tend to reflect existing areas of membership strength and presence, as opposed to areas where there are the most significant numbers of non-unionized workers. Indeed, two-thirds of respondents (66.6 per cent) agreed that the primary organizing/recruitment effort of their union is focused on traditional areas of membership strength and only 7.3 per cent of respondents disagreed that this was the case.

***Despite the high degree of union penetration in public services, a very high priority continues to be attached to organizing in this sector.***

Most unions (78.5 per cent) do appear to have a minimum number of potential members below which they would be unlikely to organize or recruit a group of non-unionized workers into a new bargaining unit. Among the 23 unions that do report having such a threshold, the average minimum is 40 workers, but that threshold varies from just 3 to 200 workers.

Newly organized units can be integrated into various types of structures, depending on both the structure of the recruiting union and its policy choices. In particular, it is sometimes argued that unions need to favour more encompassing structures in order to ensure that smaller units are economically viable. Among the respondent unions in the survey that favour one or the other of independent locals or composite local structures for their newly organized units, 33.3 per cent favoured mainly independent locals, 27 per cent favoured mainly composite or amalgamated locals, and 27 per cent favoured both types of local structure. A further 12.7 per cent of unions indicate that they did not favour either one nor the other type of structure.

Most unions do not have a set target to spend on organizing and recruitment. Only 12.5 per cent of unions indicate that they have such a target. In the twelve cases where they do have such a target, the average target is 17 per cent of resources. In fact, when asked roughly what percentage of their revenue was currently spent on recruitment, the average percentage was 6.8 per cent. In

***Most unions do not have a set target to spend on organizing and recruitment.***

terms of the overall profile of their resources dedicated to organizing and recruitment, 21 per cent of unions report that they not spend any money, 48.1 per cent of unions spend from one to five per cent of their expenditure, 11 per cent of unions spend from 6 to 10 per cent, 13.5 per cent of unions spend from eleven to 20 per cent and 6.2 per cent of unions spend more than twenty per cent of their expenditure on organizing.

When asked to assess the current degree of responsibility of general servicing staff for organizing/recruiting new members, more than half of the respondent unions (54.6 per cent) indicated that organizing/recruitment is just one of the many tasks for which general servicing staff are responsible and just under one-quarter (22.2 per cent) reported that organizing/recruitment is not really an integral part of their job. In 13 per cent of unions, the role of general servicing staff is limited to identifying potential targets. Only 10.2 per cent of unions indicate that organizing/recruitment is currently one of the highest priorities among the tasks assigned to general servicing staff. Indeed, respondents were sharply divided as to the potential role for general servicing staff in organizing: 37.5 per cent of respondents disagree with the statement that general servicing staff feel so overworked that they are unlikely to make a substantial contribution to organizing/recruiting new members; whereas 30.2 per cent of respondents agreed that this is the case and a further 32.3 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed.

One way of overcoming lack of staff resources to deal with organizing is to involve local activists in new organizing. Over half of the unions participating in the survey (56.4 per cent) report some form of training for local officers and/or activists to participate in organizing/recruitment campaigns. Furthermore, 41.4 per cent of respondents agree that unpaid activists play a major role in organizing/recruitment campaigns and 38.9 per cent of unions report that the training of activists is an integral part of their approach to organizing and recruitment.

***Over half of the unions participating in the survey report some form of training for local officers and/or activists to participate in organizing and recruitment campaigns.***

In terms of general approaches to organizing, there does appear to be considerable emphasis on this activity. More than half of union respondents disagree that organizing and recruitment has not really been a priority for their union over the past few years (60 per cent) and that there is a strong possibility of membership backlash when their union puts too much emphasis on organizing/recruitment (50.6 per cent).

In terms of more specific approaches to organizing, 19.6 per cent of unions indicate that their organizing campaigns tend to highlight social justice and worker voice issues; 19.3 per cent report that the gender, age and ethnic profile of their staff reflect the kinds of workers they are seeking to recruit; and 15.1 per cent note that they emphasize a community approach to organizing. In terms of the relative influence of recent efforts by a number of United States unions to renew their approach to organizing and recruitment, 61.5 per cent of respondents indicate that they have not been influenced by these efforts and 16.7 per cent of respondents report that their union has been influenced by these efforts. Many, but certainly not all, of the unions that have been influenced by the United States experience are international unions with their headquarters in the United States.

Just over half of the respondent unions (50.6 per cent) report that they have met a high degree of success in their organizing efforts and only 14 per cent of respondents disagree that this is the case.

***Just over half of the respondent unions report a high degree of success in their organizing efforts.***

When asked to evaluate the relative importance of various obstacles to new organizing and unionization, the survey respondents indicated that saturation of their existing jurisdiction (an important or extremely important obstacle for 49.5 per cent of unions), too many other pressing issues to deal with (45.6 per cent), inter-union competition (39.6 per cent), employer opposition (31.7 per cent) and the small size of potential bargaining units (31.4 per cent) and unfavourable public policy (23.2 per cent) were the among most significant obstacles to new organizing activity. Apart from the inevitable question of work overload, internal obstacles do not appear to be very significant. Only 11 per cent of respondents identify the lack of staff support as an important or extremely important obstacle and only 13 per cent see the lack of specialist staff as a problem. Similarly, only 14 per cent identify the lack of financial resources, 14.2 per cent the lack of support from union leadership and 18.1 per cent the lack of support from existing members. More significant, however, are the relatively low organizational priority for organizing (28.2 per cent) and the absence of a strategic plan (22.3 per cent).

## E. Revenues

As for their major source of revenues to finance organizational innovations, just over one-third of unions (34.5 per cent) report that they have implemented a dues increase at a constitutional convention over the last four years. Unions were also asked if they had protected funds for specific activities, namely a fixed percentage of dues reserved for a particular purpose. More than half of unions (51.8 per cent) have a strike fund, 38 per cent report the existence of a union education fund, 20.4 per cent an organizing/recruitment fund, and 15.9 per cent a vocational or professional training fund. A further 37.3 per cent reported the existence of a dedicated fund for some other purpose.

One of the notable innovations in Canadian unions over the last two decades was the creation of humanity, international solidarity or social justice funds. Only 13.8 per cent of unions report that they have such a fund. In those eight unions, respondents estimated that an average of 62.3 per cent of members contribute to these funds.

Another innovation has been the spread of union-sponsored Registered Retirement Savings Plan investment funds such as the Solidarity Fund of the FTQ/QFL, the CSN Fondation and Working Ventures in order to promote employment and long-term ethical investments. Almost three in ten unions (28.7 per cent) indicate that they have such a fund and it is estimated that, on average, 22 per cent of their members contribute to such a fund.

***Almost three in ten unions indicate that they have a union-sponsored Registered Retirement Savings Plan investment fund.***

The survey also sought to gather an overall picture of the trends in revenues of unions in Canada. A first, and important, conclusion would appear to be the overall financial stability and even health of the vast majority unions in Canada. Whereas 17.3 per cent of unions report a decline in

***An important, conclusion would appear to be the overall financial stability and even health of the vast majority unions in Canada.***

overall dues revenue in the three years preceding the survey, a quarter of unions (25 per cent) indicated that overall dues revenue was stable during this same period and more

than half of unions (57.8 per cent) indicated that dues revenue had either moderately or significantly increased. Moreover, just under half of unions (45.6 per cent) indicated that dues paid per member during this same period had increased and half of the unions (50.9 per cent) indicated that dues paid per member had stayed the same. Just under one in five unions (17.7 per cent) reported that other revenues available to their union had also increased, as opposed to the vast majority of unions (74.3 per cent) where other sources of revenue had remained the same. Overall, three patterns of resources tend to emerge. Some unions report a high degree of stability in both overall dues and dues paid per member. A second pattern concerns unions that report an increase in both overall dues and dues paid per member (47 of 116). Finally, a smaller proportion of unions (20 of 116) indicate that their overall dues revenue have declined somewhat but that dues paid per member have stayed about the same.

## **F. Use of Staff**

How do these patterns of revenue translate into the use of staff? Overall, we can report that the predominant trend is one of stability with the largest number of unions reporting that the number of full-time generalist staff has remained about the same (47 per cent), and that a similar trend is in evidence for full-time specialist staff (58.3 per cent), full-time administrative and clerical staff (57.3 per cent) and the use of outside specialists such as lawyers and consultants (47 per cent). However, a large proportion of unions also report an increase in the number of staff over the past three years: 38.3 per cent full-time generalist staff, 30.5 per cent full-time specialist staff, 27.4 per cent full-time administrative and clerical staff and 39.3 per cent in the use of outside specialists. A much smaller proportion of unions report a decline over the preceding three years in full-time generalist staff (14.8 per cent), full-time specialist staff (11.3 per cent), full-time administrative and clerical staff (15.4 per cent) and the use of outside specialists (13.7 per cent). By and large, the unions tend to be moving in the same direction, either overall stability (40 of 117) or an overall increase (35 of 117) or an overall decrease (11 of 117). However, another type of union (31 of 117) tended to report a high degree of stability on all indicators except the use of outside specialists, which was increasing.

## **G. Resource Allocation**

What are the prevailing trends in terms of resource allocation in the participating unions? Few unions are likely to report a decreased resource allocation to particular items and most unions indicate a relative stability. However, a significant proportion of unions reported a moderate or significant increase in resources allocated to the following items over the preceding three years: membership training and education (47.4 per cent); contract administration (43.6 per cent); staff training (36.9 per cent); negotiation of contracts (35.6 per cent); organizing and/or recruitment (33 per cent); complementary membership services (24.4 per cent); research, policy analysis and environmental scanning (23.7 per cent); coalition activities with other social groups and unions (16.8 per cent); political parties and lobbying (15.8 per cent); and international solidarity (10.9 per cent).

In terms of the percentage of time that staff dedicates to organizing, almost two-thirds of the unions (64.2 per cent) indicated that this has remained stable over the preceding three years whereas it declined for a tiny proportion of unions (5.7 per cent) and increased in the case of just under a third of unions (30.2 per cent). While the degree of success in organizing and recruitment campaigns remained stable for half of the unions (51.5 per cent), it increased for more than four out of ten unions (42.7 per cent).

## VI. Acknowledgements, Feedback and Future Research

It is clear from this overview national report that unions in Canada are undergoing a period of significant change and are involved in multiple forms of structural and strategic adjustment. Comments, questions and other forms of reaction are welcome and can be sent to one or the other of the authors by e-mail or regular mail. We also invite you to circulate the report within your union and, if appropriate, to use it to generate discussion about the appropriate types of union adjustment to the new economy in Canada.

It is readily apparent from the results detailed above that further analysis is required. The authors of this report will pursue this project in three ways. First, we plan to continue a program of secondary analysis. Some of this analysis has already appeared in recent issues of the *Workplace Gazette*, published by the Workplace Information Directorate, HRDC, Place du Portage, Phase II, 165 Hotel de Ville, Hull, Quebec, K1A 0J2. Further contributions will be forthcoming. Second, we will also present some regional variations in the results, on the basis of separate responses from a number of the regional components of the largest unions in Canada. Third, the authors will present the highlights of these results to a number of key union forums. Finally, it is clear that a full understanding of these larger trends requires more detailed analysis of trends in particular organizations and at local level. That is why the authors, in collaboration with Christian Lévesque (HEC Montreal), are undertaking a separate national study of local union innovation.

Once again, we wish to emphasize that this overview would not have been possible without the tremendous cooperation of the many people in the labour movement who contributed to the conception and administration of the survey. Although too numerous to mention, we particularly wish to acknowledge the role of a number of union leaderships in actively promoting the survey to their affiliates: first, the CLC staff and its president at national level; second, leaders and staff of the FTQ, CSN and CSQ in Quebec; third, leaders and staff of the OFL in Ontario; fourth, national leaders of a number of industry or sector union federations, notably NUPGE and the teachers; and, fifth, a number of national unions with regard to their regional components.

Apart from the labour movement collaboration, a number of individuals have played a key role in this research partnership. We especially wish to acknowledge the roles of Suzanne Payette and Bruce Aldridge at the Workplace Information Directorate, HRDC, in the conception and development of the project, and Herbert Law (Queen's University), Lucie Morissette (Université de Montréal) and Nicolas Roby in the administration and analysis of the results and Catherine Le Capitaine (Université Laval) in the verification of this report. We also wish to thank Kate Bronfenbrenner, Paul Jarley, Christian Lévesque, Claude Rioux, Sylvain Schetagne and several other colleagues for their initial input on the development of the questionnaire. The interpretation and presentation of the results remains the responsibility of the authors.

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