

Section 10.—Canada and the International Labour Organization

The Department of Labour is the officially designated liaison between the Government of Canada and the International Labour Organization. The ILO was established in 1919, in association with the League of Nations under the Treaties of Peace, with the object of improving labour and social conditions throughout the world by international agreement and legislative action. Under an agreement approved by the General Conference of the International Labour Organization and by the United Nations General Assembly in 1946, the Organization became a specialized agency of the United Nations although it retained its autonomy.

The ILO is an association of 102 Member States, financed by their governments and democratically controlled by representatives of those governments and of their organized employers and workers. It is comprised of three main organs: (1) the Governing Body; (2) the International Labour Office; and (3) the International Labour Conference. Since World War II the ILO has extended its field of activities by the establishment of ten tripartite industrial committees to deal with problems of important world industries, by the holding of regional and special technical conferences, and by technical assistance to aid under-developed countries in such fields as co-operatives, social security, vocational training, productivity techniques and employment service organization.

The Governing Body consists of 40 members—20 government representatives, 10 employers' representatives and 10 workers' representatives. Of the government seats, each of the 10 Member States of chief industrial importance (of which Canada is one) holds a permanent place and the other 10 government representatives are elected triennially by the Conference. The worker and employer members are elected by their groups every three years at the Conference. The Governing Body meets three times a year and has supervision over the work of the International Labour Office and the various Conferences and Committees, in addition to framing the budget and approving the agendas of the Conferences and meetings. Canada's representative on the Governing Body is the Deputy Minister of Labour for Canada.

The International Labour Office acts as the permanent secretariat of the ILO and as a world research and information centre and publishing house on all subjects concerned with working and living conditions. In the operational field it assists Member States by furnishing experts on manpower training and technical and other types of assistance. The ILO maintains branch offices in all parts of the world; the Canada Branch is located at 202 Queen Street, Ottawa.

The International Labour Conference is a world assembly for the consideration of labour and social problems. It meets annually and is attended by four delegates from each Member State (two representing the government, one representing the employers and one representing the workers) accompanied by technical advisers. The Conference formulates international standards concerning working and living conditions in the form of Conventions and Recommendations. A Convention, after adoption, must be considered by the competent authorities in each Member State with a view to possible ratification; however, each Member State decides whether or not to ratify any Convention, and only by ratification does it assume the obligation to bring its legislation in that field up to the standard set by the Convention. A Recommendation is less formal; it contains general principles for the guidance of governments in drafting legislation or in issuing administrative orders and is not subject to ratification by the Member States.

There have been 45 Sessions of the International Labour Conference, at which 116 Conventions and 115 Recommendations have been adopted, covering a wide range of subjects such as industrial relations, freedom of association, hours of work, weekly rest, holidays with pay, minimum wages, night work of women and young persons, industrial health and safety, workmen's compensation, conditions of work for seamen, dockers and fishermen, unemployment and health insurance, protection of migrant workers, equal