

EMPLOYMENT AND INCOMES

There were about 12.2 million people in the civilian labour force in Canada in 1983. Of that number, an estimated 10.7 million persons were employed; 1.4 million or 11.9% were unemployed. The proportion of females in the labour force increased from 49.0% in 1979 to 52.6% in 1983. Of approximately 8.7 million males over 15 years of age in the population in 1979, 78.5% were in the labour force; in 1983 the participation rate was 76.7% of the estimated 9.3 million males in the population.

5.1 Government in relation to employment

5.1.1 Labour Canada

The federal Department of Labour (Labour Canada) was established in 1900 and now operates under the authority of the Department of Labour Act (RSC 1970, c.L-2 as amended by 1980-81, c.60, June 30, 1981). The minister of labour is responsible for the Canada Labour Code, in effect since July 1971. It contains sections on labour standards, safety of employees, and industrial relations. The department administers acts covering fair wages and hours of work, and worker compensation for government employees and merchant seamen. The minister reports to Parliament on behalf of the Canada Labour Relations Board, the Merchant Seamen Compensation Board and the Canadian centre for occupational health and safety.

Concerns such as wage determination and the role of collective bargaining, job creation and job security, technological change and the changing role of women in the work force were among the labour issues earmarked for departmental attention in 1982-83.

Federal industrial relations legislation applies to employers, employees and trade unions employed on federal works and undertakings, including the interprovincial and international railways; highway transport; telephone, telegraph, and cable systems; pipelines; canals; ferries, tunnels and bridges; shipping and shipping services; radio and television broadcasting, including cablevision; air transport; banks; grain elevators; flour and feed mills, feed warehouses, and grain seed cleaning plants; uranium mines and the employees of some Crown corporations and agencies.

The department is responsible for conciliation and arbitration procedures in industrial disputes and for processing certain complaints because of violation of legislation. It determines wage rates and hours of work for federal government contracts for construction or supplies, and promotes improved industrial relations through union-management consultation and by preventive mediation through industrial relations consultants. The department administers a program of pre-retirement benefits for workers in textile, clothing, footwear and tanning industries. It is also involved in industry and community-based assistance programs for workers of designated areas and industries.

Labour Canada strives to secure a working environment conducive to physical and social well-being, a fair return for effort, and equitable access to employment opportunities. Headquarters is in Ottawa. The five regions are served by offices in Moncton, Montréal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver and district offices in other cities. Programs and services to the public include enforcement and regulatory responsibilities, education, training and promotional information. The regions respond to complaints, investigate accidents, conduct technical surveys, process claims for worker compensation, provide counselling on labour-management relations, organize information seminars to explain legislation administered by the department, and sponsor conferences to further departmental goals and objectives.

The **Women's Bureau** works to improve the situation of women in the labour force. Research and policy development has focused primarily on proposed amendments to the labour code: improved provisions for maternity leave; unpaid parental and adoption leave, available to either parent; unpaid leave for either parent for child care responsibilities; a definition of sexual harassment and policies to be followed by employees to minimize sexual harassment in the workplace — so that it may be recognized not only as a human rights issue, but as an employment problem. The bureau sponsored and participated in employment and labour related conferences, seminars and intergovernmental and international forums affecting women in the world of paid work. The bureau organized Canada's first conference on the effects of micro-technology on the