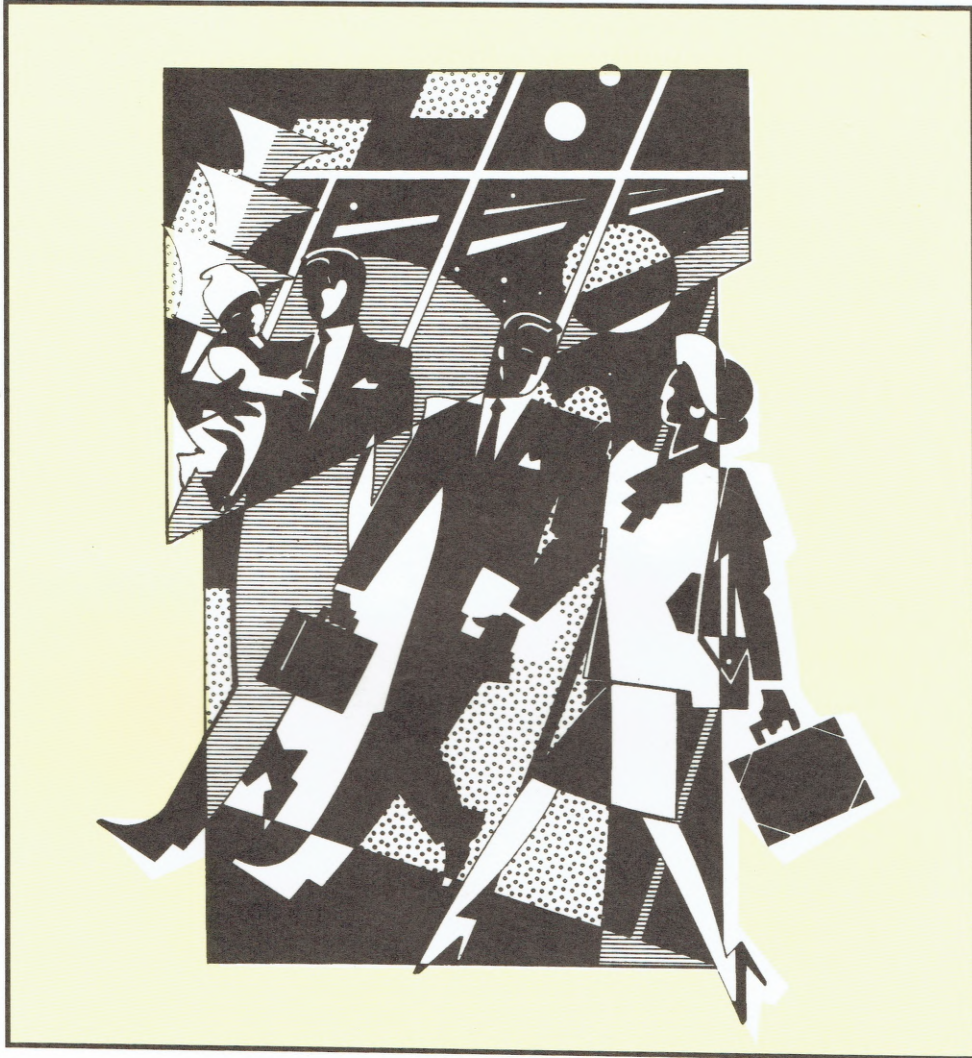


WORK and FAMILY

Sharing the Balance ...



The Union Gas Experience.

A Change Agent Project by



Ontario
Women's
Directorate

and

Union Gas

Sharing the Balance ... The Union Gas Experience

A Joint Change Agent Project

by the



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Union Gas

May 1992

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THE PARTNERS ...

The Change Agent Program

The Change Agent Program is designed to improve the economic status and representation of women in the labour force by providing tangible examples of project initiatives for organizations to consider when developing their own workplace equity programs.

The Change Agent Program enables the Ontario Women's Directorate to work in partnership with a wide range of organizations, including unions, employers, and community associations, on a number of topical workplace equity issues, such as the harmonization of paid work and family responsibilities.

Change Agent partners agree to share the project results with other organizations in order to provide valuable resources in the form of publications, training materials, videos and other relevant information. The end result is increased understanding of workplace equity issues and strategies which can be implemented to bring about meaningful changes in the workplace.



Union Gas is an integrated natural gas storage, transmission and distribution company servicing close to 613,000 residential, commercial and industrial customers in Ontario. The company employs some 2,500 people. Hourly and field staff are unionized as are approximately 40 percent of clerical staff. The bargaining agent for all unionized personnel is the Energy and Chemical Workers Union.

"Companies are being told over and over again to talk to the customer if they want to find out what they need or want.

Well, that's exactly what we did in this project. Instead of trying to predict what our employees would say about work and family harmony, we went out and talked to them directly. As always, they were forthright, co-operative and very helpful.

I want to personally thank everyone who was involved. I also want to encourage everyone, managers and workers alike, to become involved in this dialogue so we can continue to make Union Gas a great place to work."

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Bellringer".

Steve Bellringer
President
Union Gas Limited



Ontario
Women's
Directorate

The Ontario Women's Directorate is a central agency within the Ontario government, reporting to the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues. Through policy development and review, program co-ordination, consultation and public education, the directorate enables the government to achieve its commitment to the economic, legal and social equality of women in Ontario.

The directorate's Consultative Services Branch specializes in education and workplace equity issues. The services this branch offers include:

- ▶ workshops
- ▶ technical guides and information
- ▶ videos
- ▶ opportunities to exchange ideas with other organizations, including unions, employers and community associations, through Change Agent demonstration projects.

The directorate is also actively involved in promoting strategies to harmonize paid work and family responsibilities. More specifically, the directorate facilitates the development of flexible and family-supportive workplace policies through collaborative projects with employers, unions, community organizations, and research and academic institutions.

THE ISSUES ...

Business is changing. Competition is stiffer. Markets are shifting. The focus is on customer service. Flexibility in approach, product, service and timing is key to attracting the business and customers organizations need to gain a competitive edge.

The workforce is changing. The labour pool is older, more diverse and shrinking. There are more working women with family care responsibilities. More men in dual-income families want to share those responsibilities. There are more single parents. Flexibility in when, where and how work gets done is key to attracting the employees organizations need to gain a competitive edge.

Many companies, organizations and unions are recognizing the interdependence of work life and family life.

The labour movement has acknowledged the importance of helping its members balance their work and family responsibilities. Progressive trade unions are finding more ways of working in partnership with management to ensure that workplace initiatives benefit their members equally.

They are taking an increasingly active role in addressing the issue of work and family – both internally and in contract negotiations. Family-supportive workplace initiatives, such as flexible working arrangements, are gaining union support. Many unions are working to integrate key work and family issues into their ongoing agenda.

Companies are also responding to the new realities of the workforce. Union Gas is one organization that has responded to shifting patterns of work life and home life. In 1990, the company put together a task force of employees from across the organization and asked them to look at emerging workplace issues.

Those employees identified and documented a number of key workforce issues for the company to deal with in the 1990s and beyond, including:

- ◆ an aging workforce
- ◆ a shortage of skilled entry-level workers
- ◆ greater labour force diversity
- ◆ employees' changing lives and lifestyles.

For many Union Gas employees, the number one workplace issue is balancing work life and home life. Accordingly, the company decided to look more closely at its response to paid work and family issues.

The Ontario Women's Directorate Change Agent Project provided an excellent avenue for evaluating and documenting the various family supportive initiatives which Union Gas had implemented or were contemplating for the future. The partnership also helped to underscore the importance of unions, business, government and others, combining their efforts to address topical workplace issues, such as the harmonization of paid work and family responsibilities.

Union Gas and the Ontario Women's Directorate are publishing this document to encourage other employers to identify employee needs and take steps toward creating more family-supportive workplaces.

A Picture of the Process

This project is a joint venture involving Union Gas employees and the Ontario Women's Directorate.

First, the Ontario Women's Directorate and Union Gas negotiated the details of a working agreement. Next, a steering committee was set up to guide the course of the project. Members of this committee met with representatives of the Energy and Chemical Workers Union, who endorsed the project. Committee members also contacted employees and arranged for them to participate in one-on-one interviews and focus groups.

The benefits of the project are clear. Union Gas now has a better understanding of the paid work and family issues facing its workforce. Both Union Gas and the Energy and Chemical Workers Union have a better sense of where they can work more effectively together. Being able to discuss issues and possible answers also helped to open up the lines of communication between employees and managers.

The bottom line is that Union Gas and its employees now have in place both the framework for an effective family-supportive environment and the mechanisms to resolve paid work and family conflicts as they arise.

Framing the Study

"We have a very diverse and growing membership. We bargain with a lot of different businesses in a variety of industries. Issues that were resolved in the '50s in one industry can be brand new for another industry in the '90s.

It's difficult to get members who are still fighting for decent working conditions to pay full attention to newer issues such as family and work balance. So it's hard to get it on the national agenda. We're glad that companies like Union Gas are taking the initiative and we support them in this endeavor."

Bryan van Rassel
National Representative
Energy and Chemical
Workers Union

Many workplace policies can contribute to a family-supportive environment. For example, a corporate commitment to fair pay and employment equity can help to strengthen the relationship between family and paid work. Likewise, flexible benefits plans which enable employees to tailor a benefits package which meets their needs can help employees bridge their on-the-job and off-the-job lives.

For the purpose of this project, however, the focus is on areas of policy and practice where new and significant issues are emerging. They are also areas where a company can have a direct, positive and visible impact on the daily circumstances of its employees. Those areas include:

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Adjusting the Focus

This document describes the Union Gas response to each of these initiatives by:

❖ Issues

❖ looking at the **ISSUES** from the company's perspective

? Options

? examining the **OPTIONS** Union Gas considered

➡ Approach

➡ detailing the **APPROACH** the company took and the response of employees involved in the initiative

◀ Looking Back

◀ **LOOKING BACK** at what Union Gas did and how it worked

▶ Looking Ahead

▶ **LOOKING AHEAD** at what is next on the company's agenda

Also included in this publication is draft policy language other companies might wish to consider when developing similar initiatives for their employees.

SUPPORT FOR FAMILY CARE ...

53 percent of dual-parent families are also dual-earner families ¹

61 percent of single parents are in the workforce ²

56 percent of women are active in the workforce ³

50 percent of mothers with children under three are in the workforce ⁴



Issues

The labour force of the 1990s and beyond will be dominated by employees who share at least some responsibility for family care.

Most employees with children will be involved in some form of concentrated child care for an average of 17 years. ⁵ The amount of time that families will be involved with elder care is likely to average 18 years. ⁶

As parents of the baby boom generation continue to age, more of their adult children will be combining a job with elder care. In a growing number of households, family members will be caring for both elderly relatives and for children or teenagers.

In the past, employees often had the support of someone at home or an extended family member to help out with family care responsibilities. Today, however, the responsibility for providing child care and elder care often rests with people who face the demands of full-time paid work as well.

Combining the care of family members with a job can mean added stress, both at home and at work. For a company, that added stress can translate into increased lateness and absenteeism, lower productivity and ultimately higher costs. Helping employees to deal more effectively with their dependent care responsibilities can make the difference for many individuals while reducing business costs.

? Options

There are many ways in which organizations can help employees meet their family care responsibilities.

Companies responding to the growing need for elder care support services are implementing initiatives such as:

- **flexible working arrangements** with employees starting work later in the morning or finishing earlier in the afternoon so they can help elderly relatives with meals or other tasks
- **subsidies for respite care** giving employees a needed break from elder care responsibilities during evenings or on weekends
- **extended dependent care coverage** to include the health and dental care expenses of elderly parents
- enabling employees to purchase **long term care insurance** at group rates; this may include the home services of a nurse, therapist or home health aide as well as some nursing home care
- **computerized information, education and referral services** in the workplace so employees can gain access to advice and information about elder care services and facilities
- **counselling** to help employees deal with the emotional stress associated with caring for the elderly
- company-sponsored **information workshops, seminars, brown-bag lunches or “fairs”** where local agencies come into the workplace and provide information on services for the elderly.

Some options to help working families provide quality, affordable care for their children include:

- **flexible working arrangements or reduced hours** of work so employees can care for their children before or after school
- **expanded leave policies** such as time off in an emergency when a child is ill or when regular care arrangements break down
- providing **information and referral services** on child care facilities in the community
- arranging for **preferential registration** at local child care facilities
- establishing a **network of employees** who can assist one another with child care
- company-sponsored **emergency or nanny services** to care for a child who is ill
- assisting in the development or operation of **community child care programs** that meet employees' needs
- **direct subsidies** for all or a part of employees' child care expenses
- on-site or near-site **employer-sponsored child care centres** for the children of employees.

The Union Gas Approach ...

Different Options to Meet Different Needs

Because no two families have the same lifestyle and resources, no two families will have the same needs, goals and priorities.

That is why Union Gas has put in place a range of options to help employees manage their family care responsibilities. These options are in addition to flexible working arrangements and various leave policies which help employees balance paid work and family priorities.

EAP

Through an external Employee Assistance Program, the company makes counselling and referral services available to those who are caring for an elderly relative now or will be at some point in the future. This service enables employees to explore various elder care alternatives without having to spend hours on the telephone or visit facilities that do not offer what they need.

Also through the Employee Assistance Program, employees have access to a 24-hour-a-day information, resource and referral service to help them find quality, affordable and flexible child care. This service, which is available to Union Gas employees in every region in which the company operates, provides parents with information they need on the full range of child care options available in their own community.

Building a Child Care Centre

Kids' Stuff

The cornerstone of the Union Gas child care commitment is Kids' Stuff ... The Family Learning Centre on the Thames.

Kids' Stuff is a \$1 million joint venture between the Ministry of Community and Social Services, Union Gas and St. Clair College. The centre provides high quality, competitively-priced, full-time child care for 64 infant-to-school-aged children of the company's head office, Chatham Division, and Dawn Township employees.

Union Gas made it clear from the start that this was to be an employee-driven initiative. While remaining at "arm's length" from the venture, the company did move the process forward by bringing in child care experts from the community to analyze and discuss various options. A child care needs assessment survey for employees in the Chatham area was also developed and distributed by the company.



Kids' Stuff was initiated by a number of employees from the company's head office in Chatham. They all had an interest in expanding their options and decreasing their stress in looking for child care. The success of the venture is the result of their hard work and dedication.

"Once we knew that we had the go-ahead, I was allowed to spend 50 percent of my work time on child care business. It soon proved to be an enormous task and I switched over to it full-time. Many of us devoted most of our personal time too, until about a month after it opened. It still takes a lot of time and energy to keep it running. You need a very committed group to succeed and maintain your success."

Jennifer Verwegen
Administrator
Customer Accounting
Operations
Chatham

All of the administrative and organizational work, however, was done by a small group of interested employees. Once they discovered there was sufficient demand to fill a child care centre, they appointed a start-up group of employees and other interested parties. This group included representatives of St. Clair College – a local community college with an Early Childhood Education Program and a mandate to participate in launching new child care centres.

At first, the group considered renting or renovating an existing local structure. When this option proved impractical, they put forward a written proposal to Union Gas' human resources division, the St. Clair College board of directors, and representatives of the Ministry of Community and Social Services to jointly sponsor the building of a child care centre in Chatham.

The research backing the proposal persuaded the parties to participate. The Ministry funded 80 per cent of building and equipment costs and also provided some start-up funding. St. Clair College contributed land from their Thames campus. Union Gas contributed an interest-free loan for 20 per cent of the building and equipment, as well as additional money for start-up costs.

Once the commitments were in place, the real work began. The child care centre was incorporated as a non-profit business and a volunteer board of directors was elected. It was this group, together with the ongoing support of the company, that made the dream a reality.

In September 1990, amid some last minute sweeping and organizing of equipment, Kids' Stuff opened its doors.

The centre is proud of its reputation over the first year that has led to a healthy waiting list. Kids' Stuff is also proud of its success in overcoming some of the initial obstacles, such as parents withdrawing their children for the summer, staff turnover, and space reallocation. The centre is up and running – and self-supporting. It is a success story to be proud of.

"My girls have been involved in all of the programs at Kids' Stuff. One started as an infant and the other as a pre-schooler. There are lots of things that we like about the child care centre. They are always happy to go and the little one sometimes doesn't want to leave. There is a good balance of indoor and outdoor play and a lot of extra-curricular activities. It attracts high-quality staff and has competitive fees. The fact that the building has been tailored to the needs of children is a bonus."

Jeff Matthyssen
Co-ordinator
Information Technology
Chatham

Looking Back

Building a child care centre is not the answer for every organization. It certainly is not easy. Lots of advice is needed from experts in the field and lots of support from the various funding agencies. Most important of all is a dedicated, enthusiastic and capable team to pull it off.

It is also necessary to have the full-time commitment of at least one person who can manage the whole process – someone who is kept on the payroll full-time until the project is up and running.

Even with all that, it can be two to three years from conception to completion of a project that may be used by only a small proportion of the workforce. But for Union Gas, it has been worth it.

Looking Ahead

Union Gas is encouraging managers in every region of the company to examine the full range of child care options and identify what kind of support is needed for their employees.

Human resources is currently working on a needs assessment survey and the company is considering piloting another form of child care assistance in the Hamilton/Halton region:

Bruce Wilson, Division Supervisor, Union Gas Halton, is working on a survey of employee child care needs in the Hamilton/Halton area. He is doing this mainly on his own initiative with the encouragement and support of human resources.

As a newcomer to Hamilton, he had been checking out both child care availability and cost. His sense is that a lot of people are relying on informal home care arrangements that aren't always reliable and often don't meet their needs. He thinks the survey will identify ways in which the company or fellow employees can help out.



Children enjoy a variety of activities at Kids' Stuff.

"At Kids' Stuff we try to balance everyone's needs. The children have the cream of the crop when it comes to staff and a physically superior environment to grow and develop in. The staff get paid well and are involved in all aspects of the centre's management. The parents are offered competitive fees, flexible arrangements, and easy, open access to their children at all times. All in all, it's a very positive place."

Kim Poag
Director
Kids' Stuff

KIDS' STUFF AT A GLANCE

- a consortium-built, not-for-profit child care centre
- \$1,000,000 price tag
- employee initiated, researched and managed
- volunteer board of directors elected annually
- operating near capacity of 64 children
- fees are competitive
- financially self-sufficient
- initial start-up supported and facilitated by the company
- offers care from three months to 12 years of age
- annual operating budget of \$310,000
- union endorsed
- two years from conception to completion

RETIREE SUPPORT ...

21.8 percent of the workforce will be age 45 - 54 by 2000 ⁷

10 percent of the population was 65 or older in 1986; by 2011, 16 per cent of the population will be 65 or older; and by 2036, 25 per cent of Canadians will be 65 or older ⁸

37 percent of the 100 percent increase in absenteeism for personal or family reasons over the past 10 years is attributed to elder care ⁹



Issues

The workforce is aging. The fastest growing group of workers is between the ages of 45 and 54. ¹⁰ In 1986, one out of every ten Canadians was 65 years of age or older. By the year 2036, that number will grow to one in four. ¹¹

As the number of young entry-level workers declines, more companies will be looking to older employees to meet their labour force needs. Organizations investing in the productivity of older workers will find themselves better equipped to deal with the growing shortage of skilled labour, and better positioned to gain a human resource edge. For when experienced, productive employees stay with an organization, it means fewer new workers to attract, recruit and train.

? Options

Many companies have become more responsive to the needs of older workers and are developing various options such as:

- **preventative health care** sessions for older workers
- providing **access to a gerontologist** through a company health care centre
- **financial planning seminars** for those within 20 years of retirement
- **pre-retirement planning** sessions for those within 15 years of retirement

For many companies, the result of these initiatives is retirees who are better equipped to meet the emotional and physical demands of retirement and growing older.

A number of organizations are also recognizing that retirement need not be an all-or-nothing proposition and are introducing initiatives such as:

- **phased-in retirement** where employees can work four-day weeks the first year and three-day weeks the second year
- creating **new part-time jobs** or dividing full-time jobs into part-time
- **flexibility** in hours and location
- **job sharing** which can benefit, for example, both younger employees wanting to reduce their hours of work for a time as well as older workers not yet ready for retirement

"I got all of the advice I needed over the years from people in the company. We're a pretty close-knit group and good advice spreads quickly. That's how I got into RRSPs so early and why I always took the limit in the stock plan. There were times my wife thought that I was nuts but she's pretty happy about it now".

Alex Piggot
Retiree
London

The Union Gas Approach ...

The Energy and Chemical Workers Union is very supportive of the retirement programs for its members at Union Gas:

"It's important for companies to inform workers of the options available to them when it comes to retirement. Financial planning is important but so is emotional preparation for this new phase of their lives."

Henri Gauthier
Secretary - Treasurer
Energy and Chemical
Workers Union

Union Gas, like most employers, is faced with an aging workforce, and a growing retiree population. Its approach is twofold. For those members of their active workforce age 50 or over, there is a progressive pre-retirement program. For those who have retired from the company, there is an active social support program.

Anyone reaching the age of 50 receives a guide to pre-retirement planning and a financial planning workbook. As soon as an employee turns 54, he or she is eligible to attend the one-day pre-retirement workshop that Union Gas holds regularly throughout the eight regional areas. Spouses, partners and other key family members are also invited to attend.

Participants are invited back every couple of years for an update. They also hear about the benefits and challenges of retirement from those who have already retired. This is done through a videotape in which retirees talk to participants about their goals, concerns and experiences. The videotape encourages others to look forward to retirement and to plan and save for it early.

Union Gas also has a Company Assistance – Retiree Group policy providing financial and other support to retiree groups it has helped to form.

Retiree Groups

"I knew that I was getting closer to my retirement but it didn't become real to me until I received my invitation to a pre-retirement seminar at Union. Boy, was I surprised! But that's when it sank in - there's a lot to think about.

The first seminar was jam-packed with valuable information and expert advice. The chance to go back for an update every two years has helped me and my wife focus on one or two aspects at a time and we are clearer now about what is ahead than we would have been without it.

We especially like hearing from 'those who have gone before us' and their words of wisdom. We also like the fact that we get a chance to go on all of the great trips that the local retiree group organizes - we're staying in touch with our old friends and making new ones for the future."

Bob Somers
Retiree
London



A group of retirees board a two-decker bus for a tour of the city at the annual Retiree's Reunion held in Chatham.

Members pay an annual fee and receive a regular newsletter on upcoming events. Groups from around the Union Gas franchise area get together for various activities and these events have helped to build informal networks of friends who stay in touch and help each other out.

The program has been in place since 1984. It did not take much to get it started. First, the President decided he wanted to support retirees with more than just a handshake and a pension cheque. Next, human resources drafted policies to guide the company's efforts. Then the President asked a retiree who was well-informed on retirement issues to set up the program.

He then became the co-ordinator of the initiative and built the network needed to get the support of the retiree population through phone calls and personal visits. Today there is an active club of Union Gas retirees in each geographic area of the company.

Looking Back

Union Gas believes that their pre- and post-retirement programs are a good start to handling the issue of an aging workforce. Many Union Gas retirees say they received good advice about retirement very early on in their careers. Often this was through casual discussions with people in the company more knowledgeable about financial planning or through encounters with the very visible retiree population. The company recognizes the value of this type of information exchange among its employees and is committed to developing the framework for a solid network of support.

"All of our retirement clubs are different, with their own approach and schedule of events. Each club tries to offer interesting events and encourages healthy and lively participation. Members also take care of one another – calling to check in on a sick friend, driving those without cars to events, encouraging others to get involved – a quiet but invaluable benefit of having a club in the first place."

Jim Cowan
Co-ordinator
Retiree Groups

Looking Ahead

Union Gas recognizes that the rapidly aging workforce is a major business issue for the organization and much still needs to be done.

The company will continue to look for better ways to use the expertise of retirees and integrate them into company events and activities. This is an effective means of keeping retired employees informed about programs or policies that may affect them.

Involving retirees in the company's programs also helps older employees plan for retirement by giving them an opportunity to discuss issues such as financial planning, housing and living arrangements, leisure and lifestyle with those who have already retired.

FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS ...

Dealing with the guilt of not being around for the important events and questions in a young person's life is a big issue for working parents - "I want to know where my son is after school."

Often the children themselves make the demand - "Why can you never come with us on our field trips?"

For these and other reasons, some families who can afford it opt to have one parent work part-time - "Now that I work part-time we manage everything better. I even have time for myself, a rare treat for a working parent."

Such a move is not without its risks and sacrifices - "You have to take the jobs where you find them, whether they use your skills or not, and often at reduced pay." It also has longer-term implications - "Getting back into the full-time stream can be difficult."

Why do it? "I'd rather feel guilty about a missed career opportunity than a missed chance to be with my kids as they grow up."

Clerical Part-Time

Focus Group Attendees

Issues

Few employees are able to synchronize their family schedules with the standard working hours or shifts of a company. Many people have difficulty

- arranging for quality care for infants and pre-schoolers
- finding after-school programs for children 10 years of age and older who risk becoming latchkey kids
- assisting in the regular supportive care of an elderly person.

For many employees, alternative working arrangements are the best means of bridging their paid work and day-to-day family responsibilities.

? Options

“Workers need flexibility from their employers if they are to meet the demands of today’s family. They also need job and income protection for the same reason. We want them to have both.”

Bryan van Rassel
National
Representative
Energy and Chemical
Workers Union

Flexible schedules and alternative working arrangements are not new. Manufacturing operations regularly adjust worker schedules to meet production demands. Service companies often have some built-in flexibility so the job gets done where and when it needs to be done. Few managers and professional workers are able to keep to a rigid nine to five business schedule.

North American unions generally support workplace initiatives to help employees balance their on-the-job and off-the-job lives – as long as those initiatives do not threaten any provisions in existing collective agreements, are carefully planned, and serve the best interests of working people.

Employers need only to look at the range of options already in place to see where they can adapt. Some possibilities include

- adjusting the hours and places of work
- increased use of technology for greater job mobility
- home-based work for those jobs that can function independently
- seasonal or summer hours to give families more time to spend together during summer or winter holiday seasons
- compressed work weeks
- making part-time work available on a voluntary, temporary basis
- job sharing
- weekend worker shifts
- flexible start and finish times.

Many of these options can benefit both employees and employers. For employees, job flexibility can be an effective means of balancing their on-the-job and off-the-job lives.

For employers, flexible scheduling can reduce turnover and absenteeism, improve morale, increase productivity and ultimately lower costs. For many organizations, it is also a way to hold on to talented employees during a time when they have pressing family responsibilities or other commitments in their lives.

In short, flexible working arrangements can offer both employees and employers a broader range of options for getting the work done.

The Union Gas Approach ...

"I went to my boss and said I wanted more challenge in my part-time job. He agreed and expanded my job to include more variety. Now we're both happier – he gets more done and I feel that I am using more of my skills."

"I found it tough to organize three kids every day for four hours work. My boss helped me to reorganize my part-time schedule into three consecutive full days. It's a great life!"

Clerical Part-Time

Focus Group Attendees

CPT Employment (Continuous Part-time)

Like many employers, Union Gas needs part-time workers for the smooth and efficient operation of its business. The company believes that reduced hours of work arrangements can be a win/win proposition – benefiting both the organization and its employees.

For the company, having part-time workers means more flexibility to get the job done. For many employees, the part-time option means they can work the hours they prefer.

Union Gas introduced the reduced-time program eight years ago for non-union staff. Shortly after, the same program was negotiated with the union for its clerical members.

Union Gas has continually improved the compensation package for part-time employees so that clerical part-time workers now receive:

- a proportionate equivalent of full-time salary rates
- salary increases based on an accumulation of hours for each progression step
- pension and welfare benefits
- vacation and statutory holiday pay.

Part-time employees can work any combination of hours, provided they do not exceed 24 hours per week and business requirements are met. Any time they may have worked full-time with the company is also factored into their entitlement to vacation and other benefits.

Grace Martin is a co-ordinator in financial forecasting. She has been with Union Gas for 13 years and recently she asked the company to reduce her weekly hours by 40 per cent. She has recommended restructuring her group to allow for a greater range of individual responsibility and a greater emphasis on 'team.' Her manager has approved her request under the part-time management role guidelines, and the part-time arrangement has been implemented.

"Lois and I started talking about job sharing when I got back from maternity leave. We both needed to work but felt that we could do with less money in exchange for more time to be with our families – me with my kids and Lois with her grandchildren.

Once we knew that we could do it as a team, we approached our boss with the idea. He was great! He helped us put together the proposal and supported us all the way.

It took a while to get approved and we looked at other options in the meantime but now we're partners and loving it.

I hope that it will open up other opportunities to job share. It certainly will open up more jobs for people who might otherwise not be able to work and that seems like the right thing to do."

Rose Battista
Clerk, Customer
Information Systems
Hamilton

Part-time Options for Management

Union Gas recently extended the part-time option to employees at the management, supervisory and technical levels. The company believes that this kind of flexibility offers advantages for both the organization and employees.

Being able to work part-time for a few months or years gives employees at the management level more time to deal with personal responsibilities without having to leave the workforce entirely.

From the company's perspective, reduced time arrangements enable Union Gas to hold on to managers, supervisors and technical employees who might otherwise leave the company to spend more time raising their children, going back to school or preparing for retirement. The part-time option also gives Union Gas the flexibility to staff according to workload requirements and business needs.

Part-time management employees work up to 32 regularly-scheduled hours per week. Employees opting for reduced-time positions have the same level of responsibility as their full-time counterparts, including the supervision of staff where applicable. Salaries, pensions, vacations and other benefits are pro-rated.

Job Sharing

Union Gas is also experimenting with another approach to part-time employment: job sharing. In the company's non-unionized Hamilton office, one pilot is underway involving two customer service clerks.

The proposal to job share was initiated by the employees. They both wanted to reduce the number of hours they work each week and believed they could handle the job well as a team.

Rose Battista and Lois Ricciardi have very different reasons for not wanting to work full time right now. Rose has a young family and Lois would like to ease into retirement. They both think that working two or three days a week is a great answer to their needs.

Together they approached their supervisor with the idea. He assessed it in terms of workload, service demands and hours of work and agreed to support them. Then they put together a written request and gave it to their regional human resources representative. From there it went to the head office human resources department. After assessing the broader implications for the company, the plan was approved on a pilot basis.

The pilot is under review for nine months to see how it develops. Everyone hopes it will work. Given the enthusiasm of the two employees, together with the support they have from their supervisor, success is virtually guaranteed.

Compressed Work Week

"I have a simple approach to my job as a supervisor. If the staff are happy then the work gets done better. Approving a proposal for a compressed work week that they all wanted was easy, given that philosophy.

They did all the work. They researched it ... they met with the union ... they put together the proposal and a sample shift schedule ... all I had to do was approve it.

Since it began, it has worked well. They have sorted out any difficulties themselves. They have helped me sort out the paperwork problems. All in all, everyone seems happy and the work is getting done better. So I guess my theory holds!"

Max Khan
Supervisor
Trafalgar Station

At the Trafalgar compressor station, Union Gas has a team of employees on a new shift arrangement they designed themselves.

Stations must have employees available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The 11 staff members who perform this role decided this was a perfect environment for a compressed work week.

They researched the idea and came up with a proposal to work 12-hour shifts. Every seven calendar days they work a minimum of two to a maximum of four 12-hour shifts. Over a period of six weeks, they must accumulate 240 hours. This means they can have anywhere from three to five days off in a given calendar week.

Those on the compressed work week shift are also pleased with the way it is working. So far, they have encountered only one serious problem — no weekends off! Since then, the schedule has been re-designed so that employees have every other weekend off. Having ownership of the process has made the change much easier.



Looking Back

Union Gas is moving forward in the area of job flexibility but knows that this is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to requests for flexible working arrangements.

Like many other employers, Union Gas is accustomed to schedules that have been in place for many years. The operation has always been run on this basis, and shifting to more flexible work arrangements raises some different issues that need to be resolved. Offering more job flexibility is a new opportunity for Union Gas to meet the emerging needs of both the organization and its employees.

Max Khan, Supervisor of the Trafalgar Compressor Station, has little difficulty with the new shift. His experience with a compressed work week at another organization helped him see the value to all concerned. He ensured that the proposal met Employment Standards Act requirements and sent it on for approval.

In the beginning, he did have a few problems in getting work plans to each and every employee. So he went to the group for advice. They all agreed that a single posted work plan would be best.

So far, there have been no serious problems with the compressed work week arrangement and he has found it relatively easy to manage the group on their new schedules.



Looking Ahead

Flexible Hours of Work

"Many people need more flexibility than a regular daily shift allows but also need the salary that a full-time job provides. For these people, companies have to look to other options."

Carol Fraser
National
Representative
Energy and Chemical
Workers Union

Union Gas is presently evaluating a flexible scheduling option for its employees.

A committee has been formed to examine various flexible hours of work alternatives and to develop a proposal that would allow employees to choose their daily arrival, departure and lunch hours within certain guidelines.

Union Gas believes that enabling employees to plan their hours of work where business needs permit, provides flexibility that will benefit both employees and the organization. While flexible scheduling might not work for every department, the company expects that this option will assist some employees in balancing work responsibilities and personal commitments.

FAMILY LEAVES ...

Recent changes to the Employment Standards Act highlight the need for employers to be more responsive to their employees' family needs. Eligibility periods for maternity leave have been reduced. Maternity leave can now be extended by 10 weeks through the use of parental leave. Benefits must continue. Seniority is protected.

Workers and their employers both recognize the need for an income protection plan to cover short-term illness. Usually these plans only cover the worker and no allowance is made for family illness.

Unions are concerned that when this type of benefit is used by the worker for family care responsibilities, it can reflect badly on the worker's attendance record or eat away at credits that may be needed for a personal illness.



Issues

The struggle to juggle family and paid work is tough, even at the best of times. Managing the unexpected or coping with emergencies that arise can make a difficult situation intolerable.

Few employees are able to deal with all their family responsibilities within the framework of their working day. Invariably, conflicts arise that can affect an employee's productivity and performance. In some cases, there are occasional conflicts such as:

- having to arrange for, and accompany family members to, appointments
- personal business such as home repair services or dealing with personal financial matters
- transportation of children or elderly relatives
- support for family members who need meal preparation, laundry or other care during temporary periods of illness.

In other situations, pressing family or personal issues may require longer periods of adjustment. For example there is

- the life transition that parenthood brings
- the need for extra time to cope with the demands of an expanding family
- deaths of family members, separations and divorces
- accidents and long-term illnesses of children, partners and aging relatives.

All of these are real life situations many employees must confront at some point during their working lives.

? Options

With changes in people's lives and lifestyles, many organizations are changing their approach to leave policies for employees. They are recognizing that it is in their own business interests to have more flexible arrangements which accommodate their employees' family and personal situations. Some leave options include:

- allowing for flexible use of vacation, sick credit and leave plans
- providing a specific number of "personal" or "floating" days that can be taken whenever an employee needs time for personal business such as arranging a loan or attending a school function
- family care sabbaticals
- expanding the definition of "sick leave" to include emergency care for a family member who is ill
- supplementing maternity or parental leave benefits
- providing for gradual return to work following maternity or parental leaves
- "work hardening" periods enabling employees who have been disabled or ill to return to work for two or three hours each day until they are ready to resume full-time employment.



The Union Gas Approach ...

Union Gas expanded its family leave policy before changes to the Employment Standards Act came into effect in 1990. The company did this both in anticipation of legislative changes and in response to the needs expressed by employees. Human resources distributed a brief outline of the changes to their existing policy to all employees.

Family Sickness Leave

Absence from work due to family reasons has increased by over 100 percent over the last 10 years.¹² Absence due to family sickness is often hidden behind the mask of personal illness. The more a worker is forced to call in sick, the worse his or her attendance record looks and the greater the burden on other employees.

In recognition of this, Union Gas decided to introduce a policy for employees to take the time they need to attend to minor family emergencies. They call it their Family Sickness Leave. All non-union staff are eligible for three four-hour periods of absence for family emergency reasons per calendar year.

The new policy is meeting an important need. Workers are taking the time off to attend to family matters. That makes them more effective in dealing with their own situations and less distracted when they come back to work knowing that a family problem has been resolved.

Paternal Leave

"It all started as a sort of joke at work but when my boss showed me the policy, I got to thinking about it seriously. I only took eight weeks because I thought that it would be enough. It was! You have no free time and even loading them in the van to get out for a bit can be a challenge. At least the eldest was in school three days a week. That gave me some extra time for the middle one and I think we have a better relationship as a result.

Luckily it was the slow time in our department and a couple of the guys and a former summer student were able to keep on top of my workload. No one complained about it then or since. I guess I sort of 'broke the ice' on taking paternal leave. A few guys have asked me about it since but I'm not sure if any have taken it. I'm glad that I did."

Les Smith
Corrosion Technician
Chatham

Paternal leave at Union Gas is 18 weeks within 52 weeks of birth or adoption of a child. While this policy has been in place for two years, it is still not a popular area of request. Some fathers have taken the plunge, however, and tried their hand at full-time parenting through the paternal leave policy.

Union Gas recognizes that while paternal leaves may take a while to catch on, the early introduction of their policy sent an important message. It told fathers at all levels of the organization that the company recognizes and supports their desire to play a more direct and active role in family care responsibilities.

Les Smith is a Corrosion Technician who has been with Union Gas for 20 years. He is also the proud father of three children under the age of six. With the arrival of his youngest child, he and his wife, who is also a Union Gas employee, found out just how much a third child can tip the balance of family life and two jobs. After his wife returned to work from her leave, Les took eight weeks of paternal leave.

Paul Meanwell, a head office manager at Union Gas, took a couple of extra weeks off when his child was born. He appreciated the freedom to take that time because it helped him to balance his responsibilities at home with his ongoing projects at work.

Maternity Leave

While maternity leave is certainly not a new issue for the company, it has become more challenging to manage. The reasons for this are twofold. First, maternity and maternal leave for adoption are now both 52 weeks; and second, more women holding senior positions in the company are taking advantage of these leave provisions.

Maureen Geddes-Meko reflects the thinking of many women today when she says that she wasn't surprised when Union Gas supported her request for a gradual return to full-time work after she had her baby.

"I knew that I wanted to continue to make a contribution to the company and that the organization would value the investment it had made in me. For my part, I was flexible regarding the positions I assumed on my return."

Maureen Geddes-Meko
Co-ordinator
Human Resource Planning
Chatham

In the past, systems were in place to cover easily the workload demands of someone on leave. In some jobs, casual replacements were available to fill in. In others the work was distributed among co-workers who did the same or similar work. In still others, part-time employees filled the gap.

Now that more women in senior positions are taking leave, workload coverage can be more complex. Sometimes an individual is the only one doing that particular job. Sometimes she is responsible for supervising the work of others. Often it is difficult to cover for a person who is gone for an extended period of time.

Union Gas is working through these situations as they arise. Managers are urged to work with those who wish to make use of extended and flexible return provisions well ahead of the leave. Those going on leave are encouraged to think through their plans and their work situation to see what accommodations might be made. The objective is to promote a more open dialogue and to regard the leave request as an opportunity for creative action.

While not every leave has gone smoothly, most have worked well. Union Gas understands that resolving the issues involved in maternity leave is essential if they are to retain the talented women they employ. The company also recognizes that more women who enter the workforce will seek out companies that are flexible in their leave provisions. That makes the policies Union Gas is developing now a wise investment that will yield solid returns for the company in both the short and long-term.



Kelly Martin enjoys her family leave with son Brock.



Looking Back

Not everything went as smoothly as Union Gas hoped with its family leave policy. In hindsight, managers were not well-briefed before the changes were announced. As a result, both managers and employees were unsure about how to handle the specifics of each situation.

Neither was the introduction of extended and flexible return options for maternity leave easy to implement. Managers felt ill-equipped to respond to requests they received and workers were unsure about their new rights.

Once human resources heard about the problems, they set up separate focus groups with managers and employees who had been involved in leave situations. These focus groups allowed everyone to discuss the problems openly and provided human resources with valuable advice on the kinds of guidelines needed for successful policy implementation.



Looking Ahead

As Union Gas introduces more leave flexibility, communicating the intent of each policy with the use of pamphlets, information sessions and other means, will be essential.

Employees need to feel that requests for leave will not be perceived by management as a lack of commitment to the job or to the organization.

Likewise, managers need clear guidelines on how to deal with issues that arise in leave situations. Topics such as benefits administration, salary and performance reviews, job guarantees, work on leave, supplemental income on leave, flexible leave and return arrangements are issues that need to be addressed further.

"Managers have been taught to control, treat everyone the same and go 'by the book.' If we want a more flexible approach, managers need to be encouraged to think along these lines first."

"Employees should be given more credit for the loyalty and consideration they show in planning their leaves."

"It should not be a stressful experience to tell a boss that you are pregnant."

*Maternity Leave
Focus Group
Attendees*

RELOCATION ASSISTANCE ...

❖ Issues

When a company moves an employee, it is also moving that person's family. The ages of the children, the spouse's job, and whether the family is responsible for elder care are all issues that factor into a relocation decision.

There is also the problem of home equity and the real estate market in various communities. All in all, moving creates personal upheaval, no matter how smoothly it goes.

More companies are recognizing that they cannot relocate their employees without taking into consideration the impact that move has on a worker's family, life and lifestyle.



Kathryn and Warren Beck move from Chatham to Waterloo.

What would you do if a promotion opportunity came along that you know is just the career boost you need? The problem is, it's at a location three hours drive from your home, your partner has a solid career with his firm and he and your three children are not keen on moving.

Read on to find out just what one woman did and how it worked out for her, her work and her family.

? Options

Company relocation policies are designed to ease the transition for those joining the company from another location as well as for those relocating for career development.

Organizations offer relocation assistance both to attract the people they need for their jobs and to keep their talented, skilled employees in the right place at the right time.

Relocation packages typically offer assistance in home purchase and sale, as well as support for transition period costs and moving expenses.

Some companies enrich this support with:

- **employment counselling and assistance for partners** or accompanying family members, including financial support for job searches, referrals to appropriate companies and the names of key job contacts
- **family adjustment assistance**
- **information packages** about community services, child care, schools, etc. in the community to which the family is being transferred.

Still other organizations are looking at commuting as an alternative to relocating their employees.



The Union Gas Approach ...

"Each time I have moved it has been to take on a job with increased responsibility. I really enjoy my work and want to continue to progress with the company.

I can't ignore the fact, however, that each time we move my wife has to give up a good job in her field. Right now she is having to commute two days a week because there are no opportunities in town.

The other issue that we have had to deal with is our kids. They just seem to settle into one child care or school arrangement and then we have to move them. That's probably been the biggest hassle for all of us."

Paul Rietdyk
Manager
Operations Administration
Windsor

Union Gas provides relocation services to between 50 and 100 families per year. The service is available to new management and professional workers as well as to current employees wanting to advance into or through management ranks.

Costs vary depending on the housing situation of the worker and changes in the real estate market. The company works very closely with two relocation management firms to handle the moves of qualified employees. Both of these firms offer advice and counsel to those who are relocating.

At Union Gas' direction, each has developed a community services and resources package for every large community in the franchise area.

Union Gas has learned that the key to successful relocation is being sensitive to the pressure and stress any move creates. With the number of dual-earner families steadily increasing, policies and practices have to be flexible enough to accommodate different situations.

Union Gas tries to do that. Sometimes they succeed. Sometimes they do not. The company is, however, learning from each experience and continuing to refine its relocation policies.

Managing Multiple Moves

"In my case, I had a great job in a small prairie community but my wife could not find work. Our options included moving to a larger community out west or moving east. The only company that offered us any spousal job search assistance was Union. That tipped the scales. Even though my wife did not find a job in her field, the contacts she made are good ones. Hopefully more companies will wake up to the new realities of workers and start a similar program."

Jeff Carlson
Storage Development
Engineer
Chatham

Union Gas has offices around southwestern Ontario. The company is also in the position of having to provide very timely service for the products it sells.

This often means that managers and workers have to live reasonably close to the customers they serve. Employees wanting to advance their careers often have to consider relocation from one municipal area to another. This can happen several times in a career with the company.

Paul Rietdyk has been with Union Gas since 1982. He is an engineer, married to a public health nurse. Both take their careers very seriously. Since 1987, Paul has moved three times for career and business purposes. He is also the father of three children. Each time Paul has been moved, his spouse has given up her job and the family has given up their home. It has not always been easy. But the company's relocation program has helped by covering all of their moving expenses and trying to protect the equity in their home.

Spousal Job Search Assistance

For some positions, Union Gas has had to recruit employees from other parts of the country. In one case the company made the decision to hire Jeff Carlson, an engineer from Saskatchewan whose wife had a degree in agriculture.

The couple agreed to consider the offer, and the move to Chatham, when Union Gas arranged for Jeff's wife to be interviewed by prospective employers in the region. While no job was guaranteed, Union Gas did make it easier for the couple to assess employment prospects and opportunities before making the decision to move to Ontario.

Moving Both Partners

"It was quite a choice. Uproot my family and ask my husband to give up a 20-year career with his company or pass up the promotion. We talked long and hard about it and finally decided that I would accept the transfer and he would stay behind with the children. I suddenly found myself in a new role and so did my husband. He was the homemaker and I was the parent that worked long hours and rarely saw the kids.

Living away from home week to week offered me more time and space to devote to my work. It also gave us all a new perspective on what being a family means. Before, we were going about our individual business in the same house. Now, we really cherish our time together. We take very little for granted."

Gail Rumble
Manager
Customer Information
System Redesign
Chatham

In some cases, Union Gas employs both members of the dual-income family and has to manage the career interests and opportunities of both partners.

Karen and Dave Hockin are employed by Union Gas. Both are involved in jobs that move them from one location to another for career and business purposes. At different times it has meant that one – or both – have had to commute daily from London or Windsor. So far, it has been worth it. Both are progressing as they would have hoped in their careers, the company is sensitive to their situation and they have always been able to maintain a family home.

Commuting as an Alternative

For manager Gail Rumble, an important career opportunity came at a time when no one in her family wanted to move. Her answer was to commute to and from the new location twice a week for two years.

Union Gas helped by paying for temporary accommodation while she looked for a more permanent residence, and by paying her moving expenses. The company also gave her a commuting allowance for one year. While there were problems with the arrangement, there were also some unexpected benefits.

"I think I know everything there is to know about relocation now. But I sure didn't when I started out.

Union would be smart to make more people aware of the potential stresses of moving, so they can be prepared for them when they happen. Especially if they are considering a career in Region Operations or Sales, where the chances of being moved are greater."

Paul Rietdyk
Manager
Operations Administration
Windsor



Looking Back

In the past, relocation programs were generally based on the premise that what was good for the person involved in a career move was also good for his or her family. While Union Gas has been trying to keep its policies in step with employees' changing lives and lifestyles, there is always more that can be done.



Looking Ahead

Union Gas recognizes the need to be more sensitive to the career counselling requirements of the partner. The company also recognizes that moves can be disruptive for children as well as painful for elderly relatives who rely on an employee for support and care.

These issues add a new dimension to relocation policies – making information, counselling and assistance more important than ever before.

The company is also reassessing its current practice of moving people for career advancement.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROMOTION ...

❖ Issues

Fit and healthy people are more likely to feel good about themselves and good about the job they do.

In a highly competitive business environment, where people have to make instant decisions under increasing pressure, health and wellness are at a premium. Higher stress levels are affecting social service agencies, counsellors, sick pay plans and managers of absent workers. Balancing paid work and family often adds to the pressure and stress.

Many organizations are recognizing the benefits of making health and wellness part of their corporate culture. An investment in the well-being of employees and their families can yield dividends in the form of fewer days lost due to illness, lower disability costs, improved productivity and ultimately a healthier bottom line.



Enjoying a discussion in the "Wellness Corner" of the head office cafeteria are (l to r) Dorothy Hunter, Judy Dudley, Sheila Knight, Johanna Desaulnier and Maureen Debaker. Kathy Laforet (standing) reads some of the literature on health matters.

? Options

Many wellness programs have grown out of feedback from corporate Employee Assistance Programs. If employees have had a good experience with such a program, they are likely to view wellness initiatives with some enthusiasm – as a proactive, rather than reactive, strategy.

Typically, wellness initiatives can include:

- voluntary **health assessments**
- **illness prevention** education with group programs on topics such as CPR, nutrition, diet, back care, blood pressure and family planning
- **fitness and exercise** programs
- **smoking cessation and weight loss** programs.

➡ The Union Gas Approach ...

Wellness Promotion

Union Gas actively encourages workers to become involved in company- and community-sponsored sporting events, many of which are partially financed by the organization. There are also many family gatherings, including seasonal celebration parties and picnics.

The company has also developed Lifestyles programs in various locations. These programs, which are partially funded by Union Gas, deal with smoking cessation, weight loss and aerobics. Display boards provide employees with advice and information on various health-related issues.

The company believes that the emphasis on social participation has benefited the organization by building a sense of community among employees. This helps to reduce stress and encourages everyone to make an individual commitment to wellness.

Employee Assistance Program

Union Gas recognizes that almost everyone will have difficulty dealing with personal problems or stress at some point in their lives. Confidential Employee Assistance Programs can help in this regard. An employee does not have to divulge the nature of his or her problems to a manager. Similarly, a manager can identify a performance problem and not have to play counsellor.

The company's Employee Assistance Program was introduced in 1991. This program is designed to provide employees and their immediate families with completely confidential, professional, outside counselling on personal issues, problems and concerns – whether or not they are affecting an individual's productivity and performance.

Union Gas sees the program as a way of encouraging good health and well-being through early intervention and prevention.

Trained professionals provide confidential assistance to workers in the areas of:

- marital/relationship counselling
- family counselling
- child and elder care liaison
- personal and emotional counselling
- stress management
- work-related concern resolution
- alcohol and drug addiction
- financial and legal assistance.

The program is offered to all employees, as well as to their dependents. The service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with office locations throughout the company's franchise area. Appointment scheduling is within 72 hours with a high degree of flexibility.

The program is voluntary – ensuring absolute confidentiality and anonymity. Union Gas does not require anyone to make use of it, nor does the company receive any individual information unless the worker requests it.

Looking Back

Managers and workers need to co-operate in any wellness initiative. An Employee Assistance Program will succeed only if workers believe in it and managers support it.

Lifestyles programs should address the immediate as well as the long-term needs of wellness. Social and sports programs work best when they are geared to all family structures and involve all family members.

Looking Ahead

For the future, Union Gas is looking at offering 'Lunch and Learn' sessions at various locations on topics such as:

- finding the best child care
- handling latchkey children
- adjusting to the needs of the elderly
- coping with stress
- relocating the family
- single parenting survival guide
- dual income families.

The company hopes to hold these seminars four to six times per year during the lunch hour for a 30-40 minute period. Employees, their partners and any dependents for whom the seminars would be helpful will be welcome to attend.

CONCLUSION

"It's a natural evolution for both unions and management to stop looking to bottom-line considerations. Companies that can begin to initiate programs that enhance the quality of life for workers and their families are to be applauded. Those that don't will soon find that they have to deal with it anyway at the bargaining table."

Carol Fraser
National Representative
Energy and Chemical
Workers Union

Organizations that understand and respond to changing family dynamics by creating a family-supportive environment are finding that their employees are better able to manage their on-the-job and off-the-job lives.

An employee who can successfully balance work life and family life is a more focused, productive worker.

Union Gas has learned many things in its efforts to create a family-supportive environment for employees – specifically ...

- Family-supportive programs are only as good as those who apply them. Managers and unions must buy-in and to do so they have to be adequately informed.
- Ensuring that supervisors understand new work and family dynamics will make it easier when they are called upon to be more sensitive to the needs of workers.
- Teaching managers that treating workers fairly does not always mean treating them the same will help overcome any problems they have with negotiating individual needs.
- Involving managers and union representatives directly in the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of new programs will increase their support.
- Developing a shared responsibility for resolving issues is key. Supervisors need to be trained on how to negotiate solutions in response to the different work and family responsibility needs of employees. Similarly, employees need to be educated on how to ask for what they want. Both have to take responsibility for making it work.
- Encouraging employee and union input into appropriate and workable solutions is a good start. Being flexible and adaptable to change will help to keep the family-supportive environment alive and well.

THE POLICIES

Policies are written to help companies clarify certain aspects of the work environment for employees. They are also intended to encourage consistent and fair treatment of workers.

Writing policies to cover the myriad of situations that arise in an organization has never been easy.

The policies outlined here are not identical to those in place at Union Gas. Some conditions differ slightly, and they have been condensed for easier reading.

Please feel free to contact Union Gas at the number listed at the back of this booklet with any questions that you may have.

"Anyone involved in policy writing can attest to the difficulty of balancing corporate goals with a sensitivity to the needs of those affected by the situation that the policy covers. While issues such as relocation are often straightforward from the company's perspective – business need combined with personal growth opportunity – they can create severe problems in the home life of an individual.

When it comes to broadening the policy base to include situations which are technically outside the workplace, the task becomes even more difficult. Topics such as flexible working arrangements, child care and family leave are indeed ground-breaking policy development areas.

While not yet experts in the art, we have at least begun to test the ground and are developing a set of policies. We are now ready to share some of the ideas and language we have found helpful. We hope that you find it helpful too."

*Ida Goodreau
Vice President
Human Resources*

Company Assistance – Retiree Groups

OBJECTIVE:

To provide support to those who retire from our company through the ongoing financial and physical support of groups charged with this responsibility.

APPLICATION:

All recognized company retiree groups.

DEFINITIONS:

Retiree group members may include previous employees who are retired or on long term disability, their spouses, spouses of deceased retirees or of those who died while actively employed by the company.

GUIDELINES:

- ☐ Only one company retiree group per geographic area, as defined by the company from time to time, will be recognized.
- ☐ The company will appoint a co-ordinator of retiree groups and close liaison will be maintained.
- ☐ Active employees are encouraged to become involved with the activities of their local retiree group.
- ☐ Each group will appoint an executive who is responsible for planning the events for that retiree group.
- ☐ Financial, clerical and organizational support of events will be provided to the retiree group by the company.
- ☐ The annual budget for the retiree groups will be compiled by the Co-ordinator and the Vice-President, Human Resources.
- ☐ Invoices for the costs of approved functions will be handled by human resources.

CPT Employment (Continuous Part-time)

OBJECTIVE:

To provide guidelines for continuous part-time employment to assist in handling weekly peak loads that cannot be handled by full-time staff during regular hours.

APPLICATION:

All union and non-union clerical and administrative staff in all areas of the company.

GUIDELINES:

- ☐ A request for a CPT will be considered if the job to be performed does not exceed 24 hours per week. The hours of work may be scheduled as full or part days.
- ☐ Should it become necessary for a CPT employee to work beyond 24 hours per week in their role, the applicable overtime rates will apply.
- ☐ All CPT employees are considered probationary until they have completed 312 hours of work satisfactorily.
- ☐ The amount of time employed by the company, in the six months prior to CPT status, will be applied to reduce the probationary period and to determine company service date and entitlement periods.
- ☐ Salary will be proportional to the salary rate of a regular employee with the same experience and qualifications for the same job. Salary progression will be based on the completion of the equivalent number of hours for full-time staff in each progression step.
- ☐ Statutory holiday entitlement is eight days per year provided the employee has worked 12 days of the four weeks preceding the holiday and the regularly scheduled work day preceding and following the holiday.
- ☐ CPTs are entitled to two scheduled personal days off each year. They are also entitled to vacation and pension and welfare benefits similar to regular staff.

Family Leaves of Absence

OBJECTIVE:

To respond to the changing needs of families and to allow for greater flexibility for working parents.

APPLICATION:

All employees with three months of continuous service.

GUIDELINES:

- ☐ Employees are eligible for maternity leave of up to 52 weeks once they have completed three months of continuous service.
- ☐ Maternal leave for adoption is allowed up to 52 weeks under the same conditions.
- ☐ Paternal leave of up to 18 weeks is available within 52 weeks of birth or adoption.
- ☐ Employees are asked to give as much notice of their intended leave as is practical in order to assist with replacement planning.
- ☐ Managers are encouraged to keep in touch with employees on leave to assist them in maintaining contact with events in the workplace.
- ☐ Return from leave is normally expected to be within the first work week following the agreed upon leave period.
- ☐ Flexible arrangements for return, such as a phased-in approach, are available on request.
- ☐ If an employee is called away from work for an emergency situation in the family or to make arrangements for care, they will be paid to a maximum of four hours pay on three occasions per year.
- ☐ Requests do not require any written form of supporting documentation.

Relocation

OBJECTIVE:

To ensure that the payment of expenses in connection with employee transfers are administered with as much uniformity as possible, taking into account the unique circumstances involved in each case.

APPLICATION:

All management personnel in all areas of the company.

GUIDELINES:

- ☐ Those expenses of employees and their families incurred as a result of their being moved, or in transit expenses, will be covered. This includes four trips for the purpose of finding a home; reasonable accommodation and meal expenses for at least two months pending the move; and, where practical, daily commuting mileage for a period of up to one year after the transfer date.
- ☐ Those expenses associated with the physical relocation of the employee's residence, property and personal belongings, or moving expenses, will be covered. This includes selecting and arranging for a moving company; additional claims insurance; packing and unpacking; temporary storage; the net expense of obtaining release from a lease; and a moving allowance for household and incidental expenses.
- ☐ Where a home is to be sold, employees may elect to accept a 'home disposal assistance plan' whereby the home is sold at not less than a guaranteed price established as fair market value and the employee is given the cash equivalent of their equity in the property.
- ☐ Where employees elect to sell their home without assistance, incidental expenses such as real estate agent commission, mortgage prepayment penalties, carrying charges when sale and purchase overlap and legal fees will be covered.
- ☐ Employees are responsible for making their own purchase arrangements with certain allowable expenses, including: legal fees and disbursements; offer of the company's legal counsel; interest on bridge financing required; survey fees; and mortgage penalty.
- ☐ All requests for expense reimbursement are to be approved by the employee's manager in consultation with human resources.

Job Sharing Contracts

OBJECTIVE:

To provide employees with a form of variable working hours where two employees share a position in order to work less than the full number of hours for that position.

APPLICATION:

All full-time employees of the company.

GUIDELINES:

- ☐ The work schedule will be determined through mutual agreement.
- ☐ The job sharers will provide relief coverage for each other's absence.
- ☐ The employee who would have worked the day that a statutory holiday falls on will receive statutory pay for the day.
- ☐ The benefits, pension, posting rights, and statutory holidays are those applicable to clerical part-time employees.
- ☐ Seniority will remain intact for regular employees transferring to a job sharing arrangement.
- ☐ Upon return to a full-time position, job sharers will have their job sharing time translated into the full-time equivalent and the service date will be adjusted accordingly.
- ☐ The job sharing agreement can be dissolved by either of the two parties or management at any time with two weeks' notice.
- ☐ In the case of one partner wishing to leave the arrangement, the other partner has the option of returning to full-time status or accepting a new job sharing partner.
- ☐ The most senior partner will be offered the full-time role at the time of dissolution of the arrangement and the remaining partner would be required to post to the first available vacancy.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Judith MacBride-King and Hélène Paris,
"Balancing Work and Family Responsibilities,"
Canadian Business Review, Autumn 1989, *pg. 18*.
- 2 Ibid. , *pg. 18*.
- 3 Ibid. , *pg. 18*.
- 4 Labour Canada,
Leave for Employees with Family Responsibilities, 1988, *pg. 8*.
- 5 The Ontario Women's Directorate
The Crucial Balance. *pg. 29*.
- 6 Ibid., *pg. 29*.
- 7 Interministerial Committee on Labour Supply,
Ontario Participation Rate Projections to the Year 2001,
October 12, 1989, *pg. 16*.
- 8 Judith MacBride-King and Hélène Paris,
"Balancing Work and Family Responsibilities"
Canadian Business Review, Autumn 1989, *pg. 17*.
- 9 OWD, op. cit., *pg. 8*.
- 10 Interministerial Committee on Labour Supply,
Ontario Participation Rate Projections to the Year 2001,
October 12, 1989, *pg. 16*.
- 11 Judith MacBride-King and Hélène Paris,
"Balancing Work and Family Responsibilities"
Canadian Business Review, Autumn 1989, *pg. 17*.
- 12 Statistics Canada, PERSPECTIVES, *Spring 1992*.

LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH

For more information on the Change Agent Program and the resources and services that are available from the Ontario Women's Directorate, contact:

Consultative Services Branch
Ontario Women's Directorate
480 University Avenue, 2nd Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M5G 1V2
Telephone (416) 597-4500

If you would like to learn more about the work and family initiatives implemented by Union Gas, contact:

Human Resources Department
Union Gas Limited
50 Keil Drive North
Chatham, Ontario
N7M 5M1
Telephone (519) 352-3100

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