

RealityCheck

THE CANADIAN REVIEW OF WELLBEING

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IN THIS ISSUE OF REALITY CHECK

CUT OVERWORK TO CREATE JOBS	2
CANADA'S BLUEPRINT FOR MORE JOBS & MORE LEISURE	2
COUNTING THE COSTS OF OVERWORK	3
WHATEVER HAPPENED TO 'THE LEISURE SOCIETY'?	4

‘What do you do?’

It's one of the first questions people ask upon meeting someone new. In many ways, like it or not, work defines us. On average, Canadians spend about half their waking hours working for pay. Yet aside from employment and unemployment statistics, we have few ways of monitoring work in Canada. And we have next to no methods of consistently measuring the quality of work and its overall effects on people's health and wellbeing. Do we work too much? How much is too much? How do our work hours compare with work hours in other countries? Is our work satisfying and secure? In this issue of *Reality Check*, we look at work time, wellbeing, and the future of work.

Jobs, Jobs, Jobs

Counting Them Wrong and Right

In his 1936 film “Modern Times,” Charlie Chaplin appears as a klutzy factory worker who just can't keep up with the ever-increasing speed of his assembly line job. The conveyor belt keeps moving faster. Charlie finally cracks. In one famous scene, he is ‘eaten’ by the factory's massive system of cogs. He travels through the machinery, wrenches in hand, adjusting bolts as he proceeds, until the apparatus finally spits him out – unscathed, of course.

The film is a wry social commentary about the nature of modern work. It deftly shows that while increased production may be great for turning out more widgets, it can just as easily turn people into machines, or servants of machines.

There is no doubt that the nature of work has changed dramatically over the past century. While our conventional measures of progress chronicle the widely accepted benefits of these changes – such as higher levels of income and greater consumption – they have been less successful at documenting the costs of modern work.

Growth doesn't always mean prosperity or wellbeing

The more hours we work for pay, and the less free time we have, the more the economy grows and the ‘better off’ we are supposed to be, according to conventional measures of progress. By that standard, stress is good for the economy. Better indicators and measures of progress would not treat work-related stress and the cost of treating stress-induced illness as contributions to prosperity. Instead, they would be counted as costs to the economy.

Better measures of progress would similarly

recognize that higher levels of income, growth, and output in the industrialized world have not necessarily increased levels of satisfaction, wellbeing, and economic security.

GDP per capita was much lower 35 years ago than it is today. But are we better off today than we were in 1970? In the '60s and '70s, fewer people were out of work, fewer people needed food banks, and personal debt was much lower. The GDP can grow even as poverty, insecurity, and inequality increase, as the gap between rich and poor widens, as the earth's resources are depleted, and as quality of life declines.

No progress in work hours, job quality, job security

The economy can grow while work – which supposedly ‘drives’ the economy – deteriorates. The following key indicators can present a more accurate picture of whether work is improving in Canada:

- A decline in unemployment;
- A decline in underemployment, signified by a decline in numbers of people who work part time because they can't find full-time work;
- An increase in job security, characterized by jobs with benefits, security, and decent pay;
- A decline in over-work, or the proportion of people who work long hours;

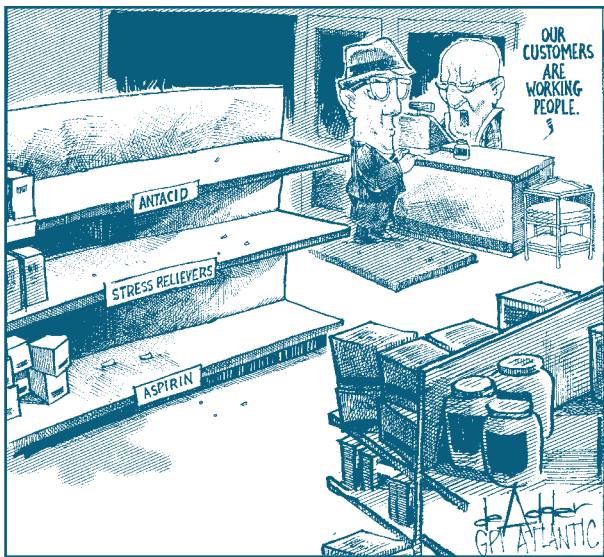
- An increase in types of work that are not socially or environmentally harmful, and a decrease in work that is damaging to communities or the environment;
- A reduction in work stress and an increase in work that improves work/family balance, and contributes to quality of life.

The trends outlined in this issue of *Reality Check* show a decline in progress among these indicators over a 25-year period. The good news is that Canada can reverse these trends

by learning from successful experiments in Europe, and from the Canadian government's own landmark Donner Commission report, profiled in this issue.

These examples demonstrate it is possible to reduce overwork, improve work/family balance, increase free time and vacation time, and reduce unemployment and underemployment.

Instead of counting things ‘wrong,’ by falsely equating long hours with progress, we can use indicators of genuine progress to count things right. ✓



Michael DeAdder

Troubling Trends

Overwork, Underwork, Insecure Work

Compared to the 1970s, a growing proportion of Canadians is working longer hours and moonlighting. On the opposite end of the spectrum, a growing proportion can't find enough work, and insecure, temporary work has increased, according to Statistics Canada data.

Roughly 30 years ago, one-quarter of all Canadians with full-time jobs worked over 41 hours a week. By 2001, the proportion had risen to one-third. These people come from all walks of life, from managers, professionals, and the self-employed to blue-collar labourers and many workers in low-skilled, low-paying jobs.

When unpaid household work and work on the job are combined, the total work burden for some people is staggering. Mothers with full-time jobs work on average 73 hours a week, while full-time employed fathers work 71 hours. A growing body of evidence points to substantial costs associated with work stress, long work hours, insecure or insufficient work, and unemployment. In short, today's widespread work trends adversely affect people's health, quality of life, and the economy.

Involuntary part-time more than doubles

In his bestselling novel *Generation X*, Douglas Coupland defined the McJob: “A low-pay, low-prestige, low-dignity, low-benefit, no-future job in the service sector. Frequently considered a satisfying career choice by people who have never held one.”

While Statistics Canada data do not distinguish between ‘good’ and ‘bad jobs,’ they document changes in numbers of people who involuntarily take part-time work. They also count numbers of temporary – and therefore insecure – jobs.

Part-time employment is on the rise. In 1953, roughly four per cent of Canadian workers held part-time jobs. By 2001, nearly one-fifth of the workforce was working part-time. Many would rather have full-time jobs. Between 1976 and 1995, the proportion of involuntary part-timers, as a percentage of all part-timers, nearly tripled. In 2001, 26 per cent of part-timers worked part-time because they couldn't find full-time work. In addition, since part-time jobs are more likely to pay poorly, carry no benefits, and provide limited job security, many part-timers can't make ends meet.

Similarly, jobs in Canada are becoming less secure. Since 1997 alone, when Statistics Canada began collecting information on whether jobs were permanent or temporary, the proportion of workers employed in temporary jobs increased by 12 per cent.

Many are unable to get by on one job. Between 1976 and 2001 the incidence of moonlighting more than doubled. According to Statistics Canada, “...more people are arming themselves with several jobs in the event that one disappears.”

There aren't enough permanent, secure, and full-time jobs to go around. At the same time, the percentage of people working long hours has risen. The incidence of overtime increased 11 per cent between 1997 and 2001 alone.

Growing gap between rich and poor related to work-hours imbalance

This growing polarization of work hours is partly responsible for the widening gap between rich and poor in Canada. While some people are working increasingly long work hours, others can't get enough hours.

Statistics Canada found that the increase in earnings inequality that took place in the 1980s and 1990s occurred in conjunction with changes in the distribution of annual hours worked. In 1990, the richest 20 per cent of Canadians had about seven times as much disposable income, after transfers and taxes, as the poorest 20 per cent. By 2001, they had nearly nine times as much. ✓

CUT OVERWORK TO CREATE JOBS

“The paradox of our times is that many Canadians today work long hours while many others have no work at all,” reads the landmark 1994 report by Canada’s Federal Advisory Group on Working Time and the Distribution of Work, popularly called the *Donner Report*. “Research shows that, under the right circumstances, a major reduction in working time could result in a meaningful decrease in unemployment and a significant redistribution of jobs.”

Indeed, cutting the working time of all Canadian workers by 10 per cent would result in a “substantial redistribution of jobs,” according to results of a simulation by the economic forecasting firm Informetrica Limited. The simulation, featured in the *Donner Report*, examined what would happen if Canadians gradually reduced their work hours through methods such as shorter workweeks, more vacation time, or phased-in retirement.

Reducing work-time can cut government expenses, make workers more productive

The results were positive. Between 1995 and 2004 – the time span of the simulation – the unemployment rate was predicted to drop by four percentage points, as many unemployed found new jobs due to the overall reduction in work hours. GDP would be little affected because the same amount of goods and services would be produced. Disposable income would decline slightly because of the shorter work hours. However, this drop in income would be offset by substantial increases in leisure time.

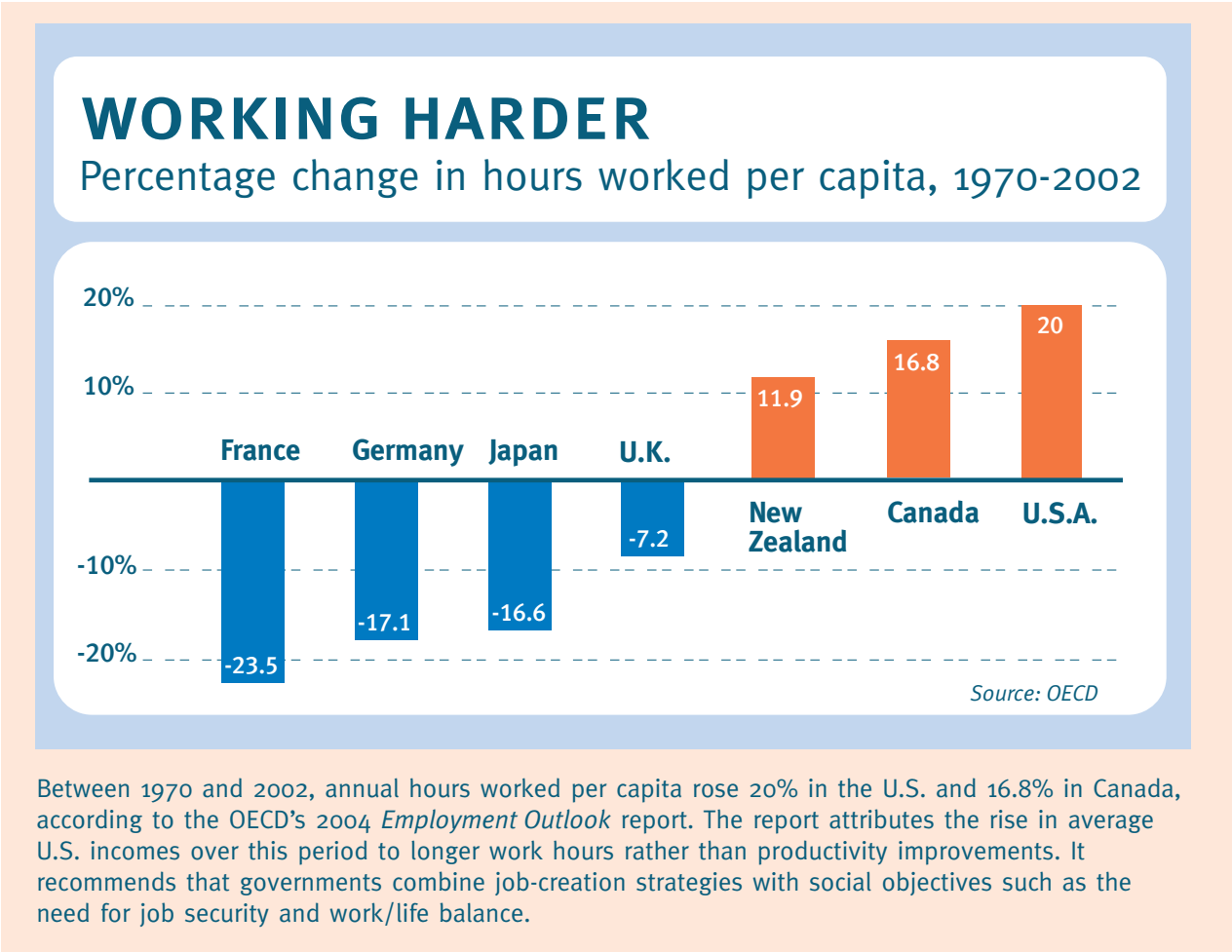
Several studies also show that a drop in work hours actually makes workers more productive. The *Donner Report* concluded that a 10 per cent reduction in working time would produce a five per cent increase in hourly productivity. In addition, government spending on social assistance and unemployment insurance would decrease, the tax base would widen, and corporate profits would rise slightly.

“We think of that as a real win-win, including a win for the government budget, never mind job creation,” says Arthur Donner, who chaired the Advisory Group.

A study done this year by GPI Atlantic uses the same model to show that a 10 per cent reduction in Nova Scotia’s work hours should free up enough hours to create about 20,000 new jobs, even after offsets in labour productivity are accounted for. If these jobs were filled from the ranks of the unemployed, the province’s unemployment rate would be cut nearly in half.

Cut overtime to create jobs

Cutting overtime is another way to redistribute work in Canada, while also avoiding health costs and problems associated with overwork and



unemployment. In 2001, 1.2 million Canadians were out of work. At the same time, workers clocked nine million hours of paid overtime – the equivalent of 225,000 full-time jobs. Cutting overtime can make a dramatic difference to workers in some beleaguered industries. For example, the union at a Powell River, B.C., pulp and paper plant restored 89 lost jobs in 1997 by reducing its workers’ overtime hours.

Canada can choose among policies, learn from other nations

Canada is in the enviable position of being able to learn from the lessons of many work reduction experiments in Europe and North America – and to learn from our own mistakes. One notable Canadian failure is Ontario’s “Rae Days,” introduced by the NDP premier in 1993. The plan, which attempted to save money and jobs by cutting work hours, was unpopular, poorly implemented, and short-lived.

By comparison, countries such as Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands have implemented a wide variety of successful work-time reduction policies. In 1995, eight per cent of Belgium’s civil servants – 7,000 workers – took a 20 per cent reduction in work hours in exchange for a 10 per cent reduction in pay. The Netherlands redistributed work hours so that workers now put in 469 fewer hours per year than U.S. workers – equivalent to nearly three months less work yearly. One third of Dutch employees works under 35 hours weekly, with many people job-sharing. Only six per cent of people working these shorter hours would rather have more work.

Sweden, Luxembourg, France, and Austria have up to five weeks of holidays per year, while Danes

have 5.5 weeks, and 70 per cent of German workers now have six or more weeks paid vacation a year. There are many options for cutting both overwork and underwork, and for promoting policies that foster equality and increased quality of life, secure jobs with benefits, and work that is socially and environmentally benign:

- **Job-sharing:** Two people choose to share one full-time job, including benefits and pension package.
- **Shorter workdays:** Parents match their work hours with their children’s school hours, to be home when children return from school.
- **4-day workweek:** Reducing work to 35 or 32 hours a week. Biggest advantages are a large block of leisure time and less commuting.
- **Longer vacations, sabbaticals, or educational leaves.**
- **Phased-in retirement:** Older workers gradually work fewer hours, and serve as mentors training incoming younger workers.
- **Flexitime:** Workers vary the beginning and end of their workday. Allows better balance of work and family life. Many benefits, including less absenteeism and workplace stress.
- **Telecommuting:** Working from home or some site other than the workplace. Benefits include flexibility, more control over time, and less commuting. Drawbacks may include social isolation and a lack of regulation.

One innovative and successful experiment in Albany, New York, gave civil servants the option of unpaid summer leave to coincide with their children’s summer vacations, with guaranteed re-entry to the workforce in September. This created summer jobs for university students and saved the state government money, while improving morale and work/family balance for the workers. ✓

Canada’s Blueprint For More Jobs, More Leisure – The Donner Report

Critics often say that when faced with a problem, governments invariably commission a study. But that’s not quite fair. The reports often contain a wealth of knowledge and policy recommendations. Too often, though, they languish in obscurity.

Ten years ago, faced with high unemployment and a changing job market, the federal government created the Advisory Group on Working Time and the Distribution of Work. The nine-member group, chaired by economic consultant Arthur Donner, was charged with assessing whether cutting working time and redistributing work hours could contribute to job

creation. The resulting study – widely known as the *Donner Report* – clearly outlined a series of trends adversely affecting Canadian workers and the economy. It made several recommendations which, if implemented, could reduce unemployment, relieve work stress, and allow people to balance their work and family lives more effectively. And then it died a quiet death.

“This issue just basically fell off the radar screen for the government,” says Arthur Donner, who adds that the far-reaching report could have helped the labour market, economy, and society.

The report noted that while some people were working increasingly long hours, others were unable to find enough work. It also noted a weakening link between economic growth and job growth, because of factors such as workplace restructuring, new technologies, and global competition. And it further noted increased pressures on families, as well as a rise in insecure work and self-employment.

“All of that has gone on in spades since we wrote about it,” says Donner. Indeed, a re-visiting of the data reveals that for the most part, job insecurity, hours polarization, the incidence of non-standard

Counting the Costs of Overwork and Underwork

The verdict is in. Working long hours can kill. This message in a 1996 editorial of the *British Medical Journal* came after the death of a junior doctor in Britain who, after reportedly working an 86-hour week, collapsed and died. The editorial notes the growing trend toward increased workload, pressure, and hours of work. And it warns that if overwork “is not to reap its predicted toll,” we need preventive measures including legislation to shorten the workweek, prevent overwork and thereby to increase employment.

Yet since the late ’70s in Canada, there has been a steady increase in the proportion of workers clocking 50 or more hours a week. Overtime is on the rise. By contrast, another growing proportion of workers is scrambling to find enough work to make ends meet.

In our conventional economic accounts, the costs associated with work trends such as overwork, underwork, and unemployment are invisible. The more hours we work for pay, and the less free time we have, the more the economy grows. Likewise, the more we spend on health care, crime, and family breakdown – all associated with unemployment – the more the economy grows. This growth is then mistaken for prosperity and progress.

Overwork causes stress, workplace absenteeism, health problems

Statistics Canada cites many studies that show a relationship between work stress and illness. Work stress is associated with higher rates of smoking, drinking, sleep problems, violence, and depression, along with an array of health disorders from heart disease to ulcers. For example, a 25-year Finnish study published last year in the *British Medical Journal* reported that people with stressful jobs were twice as likely to die from heart problems as those with less stressful jobs.

The Japanese even have a name for sudden death caused by overwork – *karoshi*. Since it was first legally recognized in the 1980s, 30,000 Japanese have been diagnosed as victims of *karoshi* – their deaths attributed directly to overwork. Today, Japan has a national pension system for members of *karoshi* victims’ families. One Japanese study found that the overworked and the underemployed had similar stress rates and risks of heart disease.

In Canada, stress is now twice as prevalent as it was a decade ago, according to a 2002 Health Canada study. The study also found lower job satisfaction and lower commitment to employers compared to 10 years ago. And it reported increased absenteeism. Similarly, Canada’s 1994 General Social Survey found about one third of workers reported workplace stress from too many demands or too many hours. A new report by GPI Atlantic, titled *Working Time and the Future of Work in Canada: A Nova Scotia GPI Case Study*, estimates absenteeism

caused by stress from long work hours in Nova Scotia cost the province nearly \$70 million in 2001.

Unemployment brings health costs

But unemployment brings just as many health problems and hidden costs as overwork. The unemployed suffer higher rates of physical and mental illness than those with jobs.

In the early 1980s, University of Toronto economist Frank Reid estimated that each percentage point increase in Canada’s unemployment rate had an overall social cost of \$270 million. A 1993 Ontario Medical Association report estimated that unemployment cost the Canadian health care system \$1.1 billion in 1993. Likewise, GPI Atlantic’s report conservatively estimates illness associated with unemployment cost the Nova Scotia economy \$182 million in 2001.

Lack of work associated with crime, family breakdown

But the costs of joblessness extend beyond health problems. Economist Belton Fleisher’s landmark work on the economics of crime found that cutting unemployment in half will reduce crime rates by 10 per cent. Using Fleisher’s methods, GPI Atlantic estimates that Nova Scotia would save between \$60 million and \$130 million a year in avoided crime costs by cutting the jobless rate to less than five per cent. All told, unemployment may cost Nova Scotia about \$400 million a year in excess disease, divorce, and crime costs.

Evidence indicates that joblessness is closely linked with family breakdown. For example, one U.S. study found that four years after the loss of a job, the separation or divorce rate increased from less than eight per cent to 24 per cent among poor white families, and from 12 to 30 per cent among poor black families.

Work-time reductions cut unemployment and environmental costs

Work-time reductions bring an opportunity to cut unemployment. They also bring what author Anders Hayden calls an “ecological promise.” Commuting to work produces environmental costs in the form of air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Thus a shift to a four-day workweek could reduce such costs by 20 per cent. In Vancouver, a four-day workweek experiment at City Hall saved 700 extra vehicle trips and 17,500 kilometres of auto travel per day, reducing air pollutants by 1,240 tonnes annually. ✓

Mandating a maximum 40-hour workweek after which employers must pay overtime would be the easiest recommendation to fulfil, says Donner. Nearly half of all Canadians live in jurisdictions that have still not legislated a 40-hour maximum workweek. Ontario and Alberta, for instance, have a 44-hour standard, while Nova Scotia and P.E.I. have a 48-hour workweek.

“The one I personally favour is a reduction in overtime work. And if you can’t negotiate it, then I favour imposing a maximum limit,” he says.

Donner has one additional recommendation not included in the report: re-vamping the payroll tax system so that it will no longer be in an employer’s interest to work employees for long hours instead of hiring new

THE NETHERLANDS

From *Dutch Disease* to *Dutch Miracle*

In the 1980s, a rash of hell-in-a-handbasket headlines announced the new scourge of Europe: The Dutch Disease. The Dutch economy was stagnating with growing deficits and swelling numbers of unemployed workers. With an unemployment rate hovering around 12 per cent and an estimated 10,000 people a month joining the unemployment rolls in 1984, the state of the Dutch economy was dire.

But by the early 1990s, things began to turn around. Through a set of policies including wage moderation coupled with reduced work hours, the ‘Dutch Disease’ became the ‘Dutch Miracle.’ Unemployment fell to just over six per cent in 1997. By 2001, roughly three quarters of the population between 15 and 64 years of age were employed, compared to 61 per cent in Canada. In 2003, the Dutch unemployment rate was 3.8 per cent.

In 2002, the most recent work-hours data available, the Netherlands had the shortest work hours of any OECD country – 438 fewer annual work hours than in Canada. It also had one of the highest rates of hourly labour productivity.

Workers now have the legislated right to reduce their hours. Dutch laws also guarantee against discrimination in terms of wages, benefits, and opportunities for career advancement. In other words, part-timers get pro-rated benefits according to hours worked, opportunities for promotion, and wages similar to their full-time counterparts. The result is that most people who work part-time want to do so. A 1996 study showed that only six per cent of Dutch part-timers would rather have full-time work, compared with 26 per cent of Canada’s part-time workforce.

“The Dutch are not aiming to maximize gross national product per capita. Rather we are seeking to attain a high quality of life, a just, participatory and sustainable society that is cohesive,” former Dutch Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers commented in 1999. “Thus, while the Dutch economy is very efficient per working hour, the number of

working hours per citizen is rather limited...We like it that way.”

The Netherlands experience demonstrates that making part-time work ‘good’ work with equal hourly pay, pro-rated benefits, and equal opportunity for career advancement can increase the overall rate of part-time work while reducing the rate of involuntary part-time work. It can create jobs by redistributing work hours, and improve quality of life and work-life balance by expanding leisure time. ✓



Rini Templeton

work and inequality have persisted, and they remain more pronounced than they were 10 or 15 years ago.

Donner Report recommendations more timely than ever

Governments, businesses, and to some degree labour unions are not doing enough to discourage long work hours, maintains Donner, who says many of the report’s recommendations could be beneficial if implemented today. Among the key recommendations are the right to refuse overtime; a maximum 40-hour workweek; paying pro-rated benefits to part-time workers; the right to unpaid leaves of absence and education leaves; and annual limits on overtime hours.

workers. Options for change include calculating current wage ceilings on EI, CPP and workers’ compensation contributions on an hourly, not annual, basis.

Cutting work-time and re-distributing work is not “the magic bullet” to reducing unemployment, says Donner. “But in terms of restoring a better balance between work and family, in terms of taking on the issue of whether work practices are dysfunctional, this report, this direction, has a lot to offer.”

For more information on work and quality of life, visit: <http://www.gpiatlantic.org/publications/timeuse.shtml#workhours> or <http://www.cprn.org/en/network.cfm?network=4>

The Work-and-Spend Treadmill

Middle class Canadians may have more disposable income than they did 20 years ago. But they're working longer hours to get it.

Between 1980 and 2001, the average disposable income of couples with children and full-time jobs increased by just over eight per cent. But In 2000, Canadian parents were actually working 206 more hours per year for pay – equal to 26 more eight-hour work days – than they did in 1981.

A comparison of work hours vs. income shows that a substantial portion of people's increased income comes because they are working more. They have essentially "bought" their increased disposable income with increased work effort. Yet at the same time, many of these same Canadians feel overworked and none the richer.

Economist Juliet Schor finds the roots of today's long work hours in "the work and spend cycle." High levels of consumption keep us moving on a "treadmill," says Schor, requiring long hours of work to provide us with more money so we can buy more goods and services.

Average Americans, for example, now consume more than twice what they consumed 40 years ago. According to Schor, between 1983 and 1987 alone, Americans purchased 51 million microwaves, 44 million washers and dryers, 85 million colour televisions, 48 million VCRs, and 23 million cordless phones – all for an adult population of 180 million.

The same trends can be seen in Canada. In 1982, for example, only six per cent of Nova Scotia households had microwave ovens. By 1997, 87 per cent had them. During that period, the fastest growing industries in Canada were computers, audio and visual electronics, trucks and vans, and child-care.

Are all our new 'labour-saving' devices and appliances saving us time? Studies of U.S. women have found that those with more consumer durables in their homes work no fewer hours than those with less.

Bigger houses, fewer people, more stuff

The growth in consumption is compounded by the fact that our houses are larger than they were 60 years ago, even as families have become smaller. In 1943, the average Canadian house was 800 square feet. Today, the average house has more than doubled in size, to 1,800 square feet. Yet the decline in family size means that these large houses are occupied by fewer people than ever before. In 1961, for example, there were 4.2 persons per household and 1.6 rooms per person in the average Nova Scotia home. By 1997 there were only 2.5 persons per household, but 2.4 rooms per person.

It's also costing Canadians more to work those extra hours. The inflation rate for child-care and eating out has been much higher than the overall inflation rate, and very much higher than the increase in real wages. So Canadians have to work longer hours to pay for those services, which in turn makes them even more dependent on paid child-care and restaurant food. ✓

Whatever Happened To

The Leisure Society?

In the 1950s, the promise of new technologies and skyrocketing productivity led many academics to predict that by the year 2000 we would have a 20-hour workweek. More vacations! More books to read! More time to spend with family and friends! Writers in the 1950s and '60s regularly imagined such a world, speculating about the massive social adjustments that would be required to accommodate the anticipated explosion in free time.

Instead, in a cruel irony, leisure time is shrinking for many people, and work hours are expanding. Even weekends, once a refuge for many, have been invaded by work. Statistics Canada data confirm that Canadians who work full-time use the weekend to do even more work, both paid and unpaid. Between 1991 and 1999 alone, the proportion of Canadian workers regularly working on weekends jumped from 11 per cent to 18.5 per cent.

In medium and large-sized Canadian firms and organizations, 58 per cent of workers now report work/ life conflict and 'role overload' – defined simply as "having too much to do in a given amount of time." This is up sharply from 47 per cent in 1991. Half of Canadian mothers with full-time jobs and one in three fathers with full-time jobs say they are too busy to have any fun. Time use surveys also show that people are sleeping less.

Work interfering with family life

In the U.S. and Japan the situation is similar. American and Japanese workers now work longer hours than workers in any other industrialized country. And a recent U.K. survey revealed that more than half of British full-time workers are so tired they would prefer sleep to more sex, and would happily swap a pay raise for a shorter workweek. In that country, 42 per cent of full-time workers have a workweek longer than 48 hours – a higher proportion than any other country in the European Union. About one third of those surveyed reported that work was interfering with family responsibilities. A century ago, a typical Canadian couple with children worked an average of 111 hours per week of paid and unpaid work. By 2000, that number had risen to 137 hours. Couples with full-time jobs and children work even more: nearly 145 hours a week, when both paid and unpaid work are counted.

Leisure time declines with marriage and with raising children. On average, married people have less free time in a day than single people, and married people with young children have the least amount of free time. In addition, parents are spending more hours at work. Between 1992 and 1998 – the most recent time-use data available – married men and women each clocked an extra two hours per week of paid work.

For this segment of workers, the decline in leisure time has been the direct result of more hours spent on the job. The situation is even graver for single mothers with full-time jobs. According to Statistics Canada, they work an average 75-hour workweek, when paid and unpaid work are combined – more than any other group.

Canada lags behind Europe in vacation time, leisure time.

Comparative time-use studies show that Canadians have less free time than most Western Europeans. The average Danish citizen, for example, has 11 more hours free time each week than the average Canadian. In addition, European workers enjoy up to three times more vacation time. Based on the amount of vacation time provided in relation to years of service, Canadian workers would have to work, on average, 15 years before receiving the vacation time mandated by some European countries after just one year of work. ✓

Long-term Unemployment on the Rise

Canada's official unemployment rate is just over seven per cent. But this number excludes a growing number of 'hidden' unemployed such as involuntary part-timers and 'discouraged' workers – those who want work but have given up looking for it. In 2001, for instance, the official unemployment rate in Canada was 7.2 per cent. Add discouraged workers and the underemployed portion of involuntary part-time work, and the number rises to just above 10 per cent.

In addition, the official figures disguise the fact that long-term unemployment is on the rise. In Canada the proportion of people unemployed for a year or longer has more than doubled over the past 25 years. ✓

RealityCheck

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Recommended Reading:

Sharing the Work, Sparing the Planet: Work Time, Consumption & Ecology

by Anders Hayden (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1999)



In this seminal book, Anders Hayden – one of the leading proponents of new work schedules in Canada – chronicles the global movement to shorten work time. Historically, people advocated work-time reductions to create more jobs and “live dignified and healthy lives.” Today, argues Hayden, these two reasons have been “joined by a powerful new motivation: the increasing recognition of ecological limits.” Infinite growth and expanded resource consumption are no longer options. Work-time reductions offer a way to sustain the environment by shifting the focus from consumption to leisure, while increasing employment, social justice, and quality of life.

Efforts to reduce work hours have been most concentrated and successful in Europe. Drawing on several international and Canadian examples, Hayden shows how work-time reduction can be good for people, and good for the planet. ✓