

Endeavour To Achieve A Work Life Balance



In Quebec, time devoted to paid work has considerably increased over the years. Moreover, the number of single-parent families and households where both spouses work is growing. Consequently, we are left with an increasing imbalance between work and family obligations. Quebec is no exception to this rule. Indeed, the *Bureau de Normalisation du Québec* (BNQ) acknowledged that the province is dealing with a widespread work-life imbalance.

Consequently, it comes as no surprise that it has become standard for employers to publicize the work-life balance that they offer.

In response to this dilemma, Quebec instituted the four-level Work-Family Balance accreditation in 2011, which remains largely unknown.

Québec has also implemented a number of initiatives to promote work-life balance, such as its Work-Life Balance Recognition Prize and its financial support program for organisations who wish to implement measures to reconcile work and family life. Financial support for each initiative can go up to \$10,000 in the case of companies and up to \$50,000 in the case of associations. Moreover, in Quebec, parental leave may now be added to paternity leave.

Needless to say, the province is pushing employers to see work-life balance initiatives as investments in their people and consequently in their productivity.

In sum, as work-life balance has taken *theoretically* important strides in the province, such initiatives remain somewhat meagerly implemented in practice. However, with the aging of the population of Quebec, we can imagine that the debate on the reconciliation between family life and professional responsibilities is far from over. We may expect that trade unions will keep making demands regarding that issue when it comes to collective bargaining agreement renewal, and that such social debate will probably translate into legislation whereas the existing loophole cannot be addressed exclusively by case law.

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