

positions) supports the perception that these jobs are of lower quality (Akyeampong, 1997). Employees who are engaged in low quality, inflexible work are more likely to experience high levels of work stress which “spills over” into their family domain. They are also more likely to express concerns with respect to job security.

Declines in Perceived Job Security

Lowe and Schellenberg (1999) contend that in Canada in the 1980s and 1990s there was a substantial decline in secure, life long career employment and perceived job security to the extent that in 1998 one in five Canadians said they were worried about losing their job. Job insecurity has relevance to work-life conflict in that for many employees, work-life balance takes second place to securing permanent full-time employment. In addition, employees who are worried about finding and keeping a job (i.e. those in low paid and low skilled jobs, those without the education and skills to compete in the “new economy”, those whose family situation makes it difficult to relocate, those whose families are highly dependent on their incomes) may be more likely to accept non-supportive and abusive working conditions - conditions which can, in turn, increase work-life conflict and stress.

Technological Change

Technological advances have fundamentally changed the nature of work in Canada. They have altered when and where Canadians work, blurred the boundaries between work and non-work, increased the pace of work, and changed service delivery. Technological change in Canada is creating and destroying new jobs at an astonishing rate and can be linked to the issue of work-life balance in three ways. It has: (1) led to a decrease in job security and/or an increase in unemployment/ underemployment for those without the skills to compete in today's labour market (discussed above), (2) led to a blurring of the boundaries between work and life as it becomes increasingly easy to work any time and any where, and (3) contributed to increased workloads and greater job stress.

Many Canadians Are Spending More Time in Paid Employment

At a time when technology was supposed to be reducing the work week and freeing up leisure time a large segment of employees are instead working *longer* hours. Canadian labour force survey data indicate that between 1976 and 1995, the proportion of workers putting in a regular 35-40 hour week fell from 65% to 54% while the proportion usually working 41 hours or more climbed to 22% from 19% (Statistics Canada, 1997f). After adding overtime, travel, and work brought home to complete the majority of Canadians are now devoting 45 hours or more per week to paid employment. When time in employment and time in family work are totaled, many families with both parents working are devoting 120 hours or more per week to work and family activities - the equivalent of three 40 hour weeks (Vanier, 2000). Data on overtime work reflect a similar trend. In the first quarter of 1997, one fifth of the Canadian workforce—roughly 2 million employees—reported overtime hours. These employees spent, on average, 9 extra hours a week in overtime. Six out of ten of these employees received no pay for these extra hours (Statistics Canada, 1997f). Since time is a finite resource, it stands to reason that employees who devote more time to work have, by definition, fewer hours to spend in non-work roles and activities. As such, they can be expected to have greater difficulties balancing work and family.