

Lawsuit on unpaid overtime a 'wake-up call'

customer service, launched a \$600-million class-action lawsuit against her employer for unpaid overtime.

She claimed that in her 10-year career with the bank at 12 different branches, she was required to work on average two to five hours of overtime every week. While she filled out time

sheets, she was discouraged from recording the extra hours. She said the practice is widespread among non-management employees.

The ramifications of the lawsuit reach far beyond CIBC and the financial services industry, said Catherine Connely, professor of human resources and

management at McMaster University's DeGroot School of Business in Hamilton, Ont.

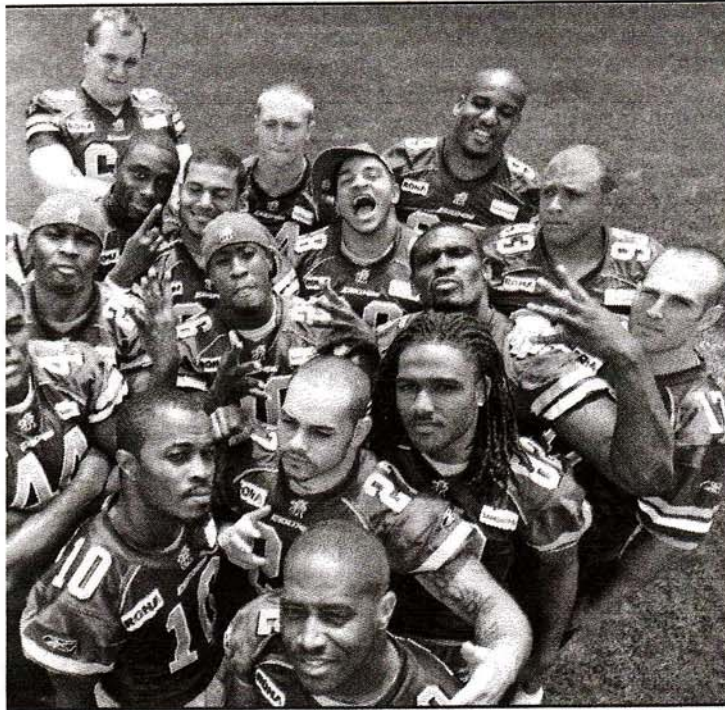
"I expect it would be a huge wake-up call for a lot of managers," she said.

According to Statistics Canada, about 1.6 million Canadians work unpaid overtime and they average 9.2 extra hours a week.

Put those number together and that adds up to about 765 million hours of unpaid overtime per year. Using a low hourly wage of \$10 an hour that adds up to \$7.65 billion in unpaid overtime.

"Basically these people are being asked to volunteer for their employer," said Connely. "I think we'll never truly appreciate the extent of the issue be-

See Page 7 / OVERTIME



's hot labour market and its corresponding housing shortage and rising real estate prices have left 20 new members of the CFL's Eskimos (above) scrambling to find an affordable place to live. Fans worried about the predicament were calling the club's office with offers of suites and other housing tips. For more information, see news briefs

Workplaces not inclusive enough

Visible minorities less satisfied at work: study

BY SHANNON KLIE

VISIBLE MINORITIES are more likely than their Caucasian counterparts to experience barriers to career advancement and report lower levels of career satisfaction, according to a new study.

The results of the study, *Career Advancement in Corporate Canada: A Focus on Visible Minorities*, are a cause for concern for Canadian organizations, said Deborah Gillis, executive director of Catalyst Canada, a Toronto-based research and advisory organization that promotes women in business.

"The findings tell us that while our workforce is diverse, our workplaces are not as inclusive as they could be," she said.

Visible minorities reported lower levels of career satisfaction with 66 per cent saying they were satisfied with the progress they have made in meeting their overall career goals compared to 78 per cent of Caucasians. Lower levels of satisfaction make it more likely these workers will leave Canada.

With the looming labour shortage, corporate Canada can't afford to lose any workers, and with Statistics Canada predicting that all future net labour growth will come from immigrants, most of whom are visible minorities, organizations have to pay particular attention to this group, said Wendy Cuki-

er, the associate dean of Ryerson University's Ted Rogers School of Management.

"Companies that fail to maximize the potential of Canada's diverse workforce do so at their own peril. It's not just the right thing to do, it's critical to Canada's competitive positioning in the 21st century," she said.

The study was a joint effort between Catalyst Canada and Ryerson University's Diversity Institute in Toronto. They surveyed more than 16,000 Caucasian and visible minority managers, professionals and executives at 43 organizations. Re-

See Page 6 / BARRIERS

Workers value benefits

Workers wouldn't trade \$100,000 in cash: survey

Sixty-one per cent of respondents in the 10th annual survey said they would pass up the chance to pocket \$20,000 from their employers in order to hang onto their health benefit plans — a finding that may come as a revelation to some HR professionals.

Employees who place a high value on their plans reported correspondingly high levels of

job satisfaction, according to the survey of 1,700 group insurance plan members conducted by Ipsos-Reid.

"What's really important is how a 'good health plan' is central to the definition of a 'good job,'" said Chris Bonnett, survey advisory board member and president of H3 Consulting/businesshealth in Toronto. "It can play a role in employees' decisions to stay on or move on because it is linked to how well other job factors are rated."

See Page 8 / MORE

INSIDE

BOTTOM-LINE FOCUS

Why HR cares more about the financials of wellness than it does the morals.....3

HAPPY 20TH

A look back at *Canadian HR Reporter's* early years.....9

RELIGION AT WORK

Accommodating the diverse religions of employees.....17

Barriers still exist

Continued from Page 1

spondents had an average of 16 years experience in Canada and nine years with their current employers. It also found visible minorities were more likely to report various barriers to career advancement:

- More than two-thirds (69 per cent) of visible minorities said who you know is more important than what you know, compared to 57 per cent of Caucasians.
- More than one-half (54 per cent) of visible minorities felt there were few role models for them in the organization compared to 39 per cent of Caucasians.
- Nearly three-quarters (73 per cent) of Caucasians received one or more developmental opportunities in the past three years compared to less than two-thirds (64 per cent) of visible minorities.

Many of the overt forms of discrimination, such as racial slurs and jokes, no longer exist, so it's easy to think discrimination doesn't exist anymore in Canada, said Cukier.

However, the study shows visible minorities still face many barriers, such as exclusion from informal networks and unequal access to profes-

sional development, she said.

Unfortunately, while many organizations state they are committed to diversity, fewer visible minorities see it the same way.

The study surveyed leaders at 30 of the 43 companies from which the employee sample was drawn. While 58 per cent of employers reported having a stated commitment to diversity, only 48 per cent of visible minorities felt senior management was committed to cultural diversity compared to 60 per cent of Caucasians.

"A lot of employers say they are addressing these issues, but it's clear that their employees and the targets of some of these programs don't see it the way they do," said Cukier.

To maximize its diverse workforce, an organization needs to understand what motivates employees and what their unique contribution to the business is, said Lisa Mattam, a Toronto-based leadership and organizational consultant.

"Maybe they have something that they can contribute back to the team in achieving those business goals that's fairly unique to what they do and what they know," she said.

Companies also need to track diversity metrics, because

LEVERAGING DIVERSITY

Six steps for employers

Based on interviews with visible minorities in corporate Canada, Catalyst Canada and Ryerson University's Diversity Institute have laid out six action steps employers can take to become employers of choice for visible minorities.

1. Assess the environment to find out what barriers visible minorities face and what their aspirations are.
2. Make diversity a strategic priority.
3. Encourage top management commitment to diversity.
4. Implement career development systems that are formal and transparent.
5. Develop a robust accountability framework around diversity because what gets measured gets done.
6. Provide support mechanisms such as mentors, role models, networking opportunities and high-profile assignments.

what gets measured often gets done, said Cukier.

"Visible minority respondents tended to be more satisfied in organizations that tracked diversity metrics," she said. "Organizations that have well-developed strategies around diversity tend to have those metrics."

Unfortunately, tracking was one of the least reported practices among the company results, said Cukier.

At the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC), one of the study's sponsors, diversity and tracking has been a main focus for many years, in part because of federal employment equity rules.

About 23 per cent of RBC's workforce is made up of visible

minorities and 10 per cent of executives are visible minorities, he said Gordon Nixon, the bank's CEO.

"There's lots more room for improvement going forward," he said. "This is not a question of a six-month or a one-year fix, or where you just go out and hire externally. It's a question of putting in place programs where you gradually embed that improvement over a long period of time so it's sustainable."

One of the bank's initiatives starts right at the screening phase. In an attempt to eliminate some initial biases, RBC interviewers aren't allowed to see the university from which a candidate received his degree, said Nixon.

Thomson Labour Relations and Employment Law Group

Get Labour and Employee Relations from your perspective.

With labour and employment issues, you want advice that does more than answer your legal questions. You need strategies that will further your short and long-term business goals while enhancing your employer/employee/union environment relationships.

Miller Thomson has enabled Miller Thomson's Labour Relations and Employment Law Group for nearly 50 years. We are an extension of our clients' management strategies, knowledgeable in and focused on their unique circumstances and sensitive to their business objectives.

