

# CHC2P Unit 5: Canada's Century

## Activity 5: The Canadian Worker

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### Overview

In this activity, you will explore how the workplace has changed in Canada this century.

### Lesson

#### *The Canadian Labour Movement*

Since the 1920s, the Canadian labour movement has fought for and achieved numerous improvements in the workplace. Among these are the 40-hour work week, the minimum wage, health and safety standards, unemployment insurance, vacation pay, the Rand Formula and employment standards.

#### *Changes in the Canadian Worker*



The typical worker in the 1950s was a white male working in a primary or secondary industry for a period of 30 to 35 years. The primary industry was logging, mining, or farming. The secondary industry was manufacturing. The worker earned enough money to support himself and his family.

The profile of the typical worker has changed for a variety of reasons; among the factors are: automation, feminism, globalization, and government policies. Today, the worker is either male or female, and often working in a service industry. Commentators suggest that the typical Canadian will change jobs seven times in a lifetime. Many jobs are part-time minimum wage jobs, sometimes called "Mc Jobs." Typically, they do not have many benefits or union protection.

Demography is the study of the characteristics of human populations, such as size and growth. The Canadian worker today faces a number of new demographic factors. Statistics indicate, for example, that potential workers stay in school longer than they did 50 years ago.

#### *The Baby Boomers in the Job Market*

We know that birth rates increased dramatically in the years immediately following World War II. This phenomenon of increased births has been called the Baby Boom. The children born during this period of 1945 to 1955 have become known as the "Baby Boomers."

In the expanding economies of the 1960s and the 1970s, the Baby Boomers, for the most part, were able to find jobs.

Feel free to visit [www.mrzahran.com/history/mme/canadianworkers.html](http://www.mrzahran.com/history/mme/canadianworkers.html) to learn more about the history of the Canadian workers.

The large group of Baby Boomers - known as a demographic bulge - caused changes in Canadian society. The presence of the Boomers caused more schools and universities to be built in the 1960s and more houses to be constructed in the 1970s.

Starting in the 1970s, Canadian governments borrowed large amounts of money to provide programs (such as increased health care and unemployment grants) that benefited the Boomers. In 2005, the federal government debt stood at over \$500 billion.

### ***Workers and Social Payments***

In the early 21st century, the Baby Boomers started to enter retirement age. This placed a large emphasis on pension funds and care facilities. In 2036, three in five Canadians will be over 50 years of age. At that time, approximately every two workers will be supporting one retired person (in 1980, every five workers was supporting one retired person).

Demographic information also indicates that Canadians will be living longer in retirement than they did 30 years ago. Workers in the future will be faced with government debt payments and government health and other supports for the elderly.

## **Assignment**

1. Describe four major changes in the workplace since the 1920's.
2. What type of employment opportunities await you when you enter the work force, and what type of skills will be required in the working world of the 21st century?
3. What are some career or volunteer opportunities related to the study of History?
4. Describe three demographic changes since World War II:
5. Conduct research on **one (1)** of the following labour leaders. In a paragraph, describe why he/she significant to the labour movement?
  - a) Shirley Carr, first female president of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)
  - b) Judy D'Arcy, president of Canada's largest union, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) for 12 years, until 2003
  - c) Bob White, President of Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), and first president of the Canadian Auto Workers in 1985, when the union split from the international United Auto Workers (UAW)