CHAPTER 13

Developing a Positive Labour Relations Climate

# Chapter Objectives (C.O.)

After reading this chapter you will be able to:

C.O. 1: Apply principles related to developing a positive labour relations climate.

C.O. 2: Review alternative models for improving the labour relations climate in the public sector.

C.O. 3: Identify various ways of providing procedural justice to improve the labour relations climate.

# Before applying, let’s review

***C.O.1: Apply principles related to developing a positive labour relations climate.***

Positive labour relationships are more likely if there is a positive labour relations climate where the union and its employees work closely with management in solving common problems. The labour relations climate can be defined by five dimensions: fairness, union-management consultation, mutual regard, member support, and union legitimacy. Cooperative labour relations practices include anything from quality of work life programs, gain sharing and union-management committees. When the union is seen to be working with management in solving problems, this partnership seems to result in higher attendance and lower absenteeism.

***C.O.2: Alternative models for improving the labour relations climate.***

The framework for negotiating a collective agreement in the public arena is guided by different models: the strike and lockout model and various third party interventions (fact finding, mediation, arbitration, public disputes commission) and designation of essential services. The general strike and lockout model operates very differently in the public sector where the cessation of the delivery of needed public services mostly impacts the public in different ways than in the private sector. No model is totally effective, although the designation model might provide the best overall results. The disputes commission model shows promise, although this might be unlikely within a political reality where governments are unlikely to grant a commission independence to insulate public sector bargaining from political interferences.

***C.O.3: Identify various ways providing procedural justice to employees and management in maintain a positive labour relations climate***. Occasionally, during the life of a collective agreement, disputes arise about the interpretation of a clause or there might be a potential violation of management’s responsibility, such as conditions of work that might be considered unsafe. One very practical set of suggestions for ensuring procedural justice is to provide employees with a voice so they communicate and seek ways to resolve the issues that affect them. Researchers draw a distinction between pro-social and justice related voice. While pro-social voice can benefit an organization in improving its processes, justice centered voice often stems from mistreatment or perceived inequities. Justice focused voice calls attention to a questionable decision. When pro-social voice systems are working well, there might be less need for justice centered voice systems.