

“Bargaining 101:”

A primer on negotiating a collective agreement at CBC/Radio-Canada

The CMG, and its predecessor unions, have had collective agreements with CBC/Radio-Canada since the 1950s. CMG has long used what’s called an “Interest-based bargaining” approach to negotiations, which involves setting out issues and concerns from the union’s perspective, and management can also bring issues to the table, and seeking common interests and common ground to find provisions that work for both sides. It allows for full and open discussion about the issues we face in our workplace and our industry.

Our current collective agreement was ratified at the end of 2013 and is set to expire on March 31, 2019. Our bargaining committee for the 2018-19 negotiations was announced on May 1, 2018. The talks are scheduled to begin in September, 2018. The 12 people below will be involved in day-to-day negotiations with the management negotiating team and are the key point people for the CMG during the process. But every elected person and every member has a role to play to ensure that we get the best possible collective agreement.

Nasr Ahmed is an Associate Producer in Sports in Toronto who has been with CBC for five years. He is an activist who has organized with non-permanent co-workers in Sports to get them out to union meetings. He is a strong believer in unions and has strong communications skills. He is a contract worker and is eager to represent the needs and interests of non-permanent workers at the negotiating table.

Sujata Berry is a producer in CBC network talk radio in Toronto and has worked at CBC for 24 years. Sujata is a union steward in Toronto and serves on the local joint committee. She is eager to address the lack of diversity in the higher ranks at CBC and to ensure that younger co-workers know they have a future at CBC and “aren’t just cogs in the wheel.”

Carolyn Dunn is a senior reporter based in Calgary who has worked at the CBC for more than 20 years. She has keen eye for contract language, excellent research skills and a deep commitment to labour principles. She is eager to help rebuild trust in the union and to represent members in all job categories at the table.

Stéphany Laperrière is a news editor/presenter at Radio-Canada in Toronto and has worked at Radio-Canada for two years. She was recently the CMG location unit president in Sudbury and is currently a member of the National Policy Health and Safety Committee at CBC/Radio-Canada. Passionate about labour rights, bilingual and armed with degrees in civil and common law, she is able to understand the implications contract language. She is detail-oriented, persuasive and a quick learner.

Harry Mesh is a senior remote area transmitter technologist based in Grand Falls-Windsor and has worked at CBC for 29 years. He was a member of the bargaining committees in 2008-9 and 2013-4. He has also served on a number of national and local joint committees and acted as a temporary CMG staff representative in 2014. He is articulate, pays attention to detail and prepared for a challenging round of bargaining. Currently working on updating Northern Benefits in joint committee.

Pierre Millette is a senior broadcast technologist in Ottawa and has worked for both CBC and Radio-Canada in editorial and technical positions over the course of his 27 years at the public broadcaster. He is currently the CMG location unit president in Ottawa and has worked to rebuild participation on the executive. He is eager to address issues for temporary and contract workers, workload stress, workplace mental health, benefits and job descriptions. He is bilingual and articulate with keen problem-solving skills.

Naomi Robinson is a production editor in news in Toronto and has worked at CBC for 23 years. She has been CMG location unit president in Toronto since 2014 and is a member of a number of local joint committees. She also participated in the last extended national joint committee meeting. She is not shy to speak truth to power, loyal, creative and eager to help negotiate a new collective agreement that makes things better for our CBC co-workers. She seeks an inclusive and well-organized bargaining process that engages and takes direction from members.

Jonathan Spence is the President of the CBC/Radio-Canada Branch of the CMG and has worked for 15 years in Toronto as a Specialist in Finance. He also represents the Branch at the National Executive Committee as well as holding positions on our parent union board CWA/SCA Canada. He has served at every level of the CMG in many capacities and brings previous bargaining experience with him.

The committee also includes CMG Staff Representatives Federico Carvajal and Karen Wirsig.

Preparation for Bargaining

At the last CBC Branch Presidents Council or CBC Branch Convention prior to the anticipated start of bargaining, a discussion should be held to identify and discuss potential bargaining issues. These issues should form the basis of a membership bargaining survey. Once the survey has been written, Location Units should hold Location Meetings to identify bargaining issues, using the survey as a guideline for discussion. In addition, the Location Executive Units should canvas their memberships in various work areas, classifications, etc. to gather any additional issues and concerns.

Communications During Bargaining

The CMG CBC Branch recognizes the importance of comprehensive consultation and communications with members at CBC/Radio-Canada on everything related to collective bargaining. Prior to establishing the final list of issues to be discussed in bargaining, the Bargaining Committee will consult with the Branch Executive Council and the Presidents Council. After this consultation, the Bargaining Committee will consider all input and devise a final list of bargaining issues. While it is recognized that the Bargaining Committee has the ultimate responsibility to determine its priorities, it will share the final list with the Branch Executive and the Presidents Council.

Throughout bargaining, the Bargaining Committee is encouraged to consult with members as required. Although this could result from any number of scenarios during discussions, such consultation might be especially relevant in dealing with issues identified by the employer where prior member and executive consultation has not taken place.

When a definable group is affected by potential changes in their working conditions, those employees must be informed and consulted in advance of the conclusion of bargaining. In this event, every effort should be made to ensure that the consultation is held with a sufficiently

large and diverse subgroup to provide the necessary feedback, in order to enable the bargaining committee to gauge the potential impact of the change as accurately as possible.

Tentative Deal

Once a tentative deal is reached, the Bargaining Committee should meet with the Presidents Council and the Branch Executive Council to explain the changes prior to the development and publication of the ratification package since they need to be prepared to field questions from members.

The feedback from the Presidents Council and the Branch Executive Council will help anticipate questions and concerns to be addressed in the ratification package. Those bodies shall ensure that the Bargaining Committee fully informs members of the details of the agreement prior to the ratification vote. To assist with developing this package, a CMG staff communications person should be part of these discussions and help in the actual compilation of the package. In addition to the actual proposed language changes, the ratification package should also include a report from the Bargaining Committee explaining the context and expected impact of those changes.

Ratification

The final ratification package will be made available on the CMG website. Members will be notified by means of a communique of its availability, along with the dates of ratification meetings as well as the voting process and dates.

The bargaining committee will coordinate the scheduling of ratification meetings with the locations. Meetings will be held by a combination of conference calls and in-person meetings, where such meetings are practical. When held in-person, Locations Executives will be responsible for setting up the meetings in consultation with the Bargaining Committee representatives who will be attending.

An on-demand web video should be made available to explain the changes. It should be similar in format and content to the presentation that would be made at an in-person ratification meeting, to provide an alternative for those unable to attend in person, due to location, scheduling issues, etc.

A minimum of seven (7) days should pass from the conclusion of the last ratification meeting to the start of voting. Voting on the final day should continue until at least 8 PM Eastern.

Strike

If the CMG bargaining committee feels that negotiations are at risk of breaking down, it may seek a strike mandate from members in a secret-ballot vote. A strong strike mandate can actually help create a deal by showing the employer that members stand behind their bargaining committee. A strike can only be called if a majority of voting members support a strike mandate. The Canada Labour Code includes rules about the steps either side must follow to be in a legal strike or lockout position.

In the event an impasse in negotiations seems likely, the Bargaining Committee would make recommendations to the CMG's National Executive Committee (NEC) concerning any proposed strike. The final decisions about a strike would be made by the Bargaining Committee in consultation with the Branch Executive Council and the NEC.

TIMELINE FOR BARGAINING

May 25	Introduction of Bargaining Committee at Convention CBC Branch Day Bargaining exercise in preparation for all-member survey Location meeting consultation plan
June 5	All-member survey launch
June 5 to 26	Location unit meetings about bargaining issues
June 26 to July 3	Location unit executives report back to Bargaining Committee on issues discussed at member meetings
July 3 to 5	Bargaining Committee meets in-person to go over survey results and location unit consultations. Establish sub-committees and caucuses (i.e. North, temp/contract)
July 6 to 31	Compilation of survey results and reports from location unit consultations and caucuses.
Aug 14	Branch Executive Committee consultation
Aug 28	Presidents council consultation
Sept 4	Deadline to submit bargaining issues to the bargaining committee
Sept 5 to 7	Bargaining Committee meets to finalize items for bargaining and to produce document for membership on priorities. Communication plan developed.
Sept 10	Bargaining priorities document is shared with BEC and President's Council.
Sept 11	Talking points sent to Location Unit Executives
Sept 11-14	Location unit meetings to report back to members on bargaining priorities
Sept 17 to 20	Bargaining
Oct 1 to 4	Bargaining
Oct 22 to 25	Bargaining
Nov 5 to 8	Bargaining
Nov 19 to 22	Bargaining
Jan to March 2019	Bargaining as required
March 31	Collective Agreement expiry date