

## **Hello Member,**

This book is for you. Your work at VICE Canada makes you part of another dynamic team, the Canadian Media Guild, or CMG or the Guild for short.

CMG is one of the fastest-growing and strongest media unions in the country. Our members also work for other media companies including CBC, TVO, Reuters, Canadian Press, and APTN.

If VICE Canada is your first unionized workplace, you're probably asking yourself some questions: What does being part of a union mean to me? What is collective bargaining and how does it work? When do we go on strike?

This handbook is meant to answer your questions and encourage you to embrace the CMG as an incredibly valuable organization. Think of CMG as an ally who's always there for you.

This is your guide; your input helped create it and your comments will ensure it evolves to meet the needs of new members. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions or suggestions.

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Co-Chairs  
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### **What is a union for?**

Both employers and employees have rights and obligations in the workplace. When employees come together as a union, their collective voice and actions provide a counterbalance to the power of employers that may otherwise go unchecked.

If you've never been part of a union, you may not know how a union works. A union is an organized group of workers who come together to pool their resources (time, money, brain power, creativity, etc.) to help each other preserve respect on the job, earn good wages, achieve useful and valuable health benefits, and sustain decent working conditions.

Unions are organizations certified by law to represent workers. That means employers have to negotiate with them. The company is also obligated to follow the rules set out in the collective agreement. To breach any section of the contract would be akin to breaking the "law" of the workplace.

### **Why do I need a union?**

Unions are as important today as they were at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when employees were battling the use of underage workers, low wages, and long working hours.

You've likely heard the phrase "strength in numbers." Well, that speaks directly to the usefulness of a union—even in today's workplace, where issues around wages, work hours, benefits, and equity persist.

Suppose you have a specific problem with management. Would you rather deal with it alone—as you would in a non-union workplace—or with the support of your colleagues at VICE Canada?

One person can be strong. But imagine the strength of dozens of supportive colleagues by your side.

Being a member of the Guild also helps provide job security. One of the most fundamental beliefs of unions is that everyone has to be treated equally. Intertwined with that fight for fairness comes a second philosophy of seniority rights. The longer you remain in your job, the more secure you should feel. That's what it boils down to. Unions believe if you're doing a good job, your reward should be a sense of security in that job. And the employer wins too, because a happy employee is a productive employee.

Recent findings from Statistics Canada show union workers earn roughly 8 percent more than non-union workers. And union employees stay at their jobs longer than employees in non-unionized workplaces.

### **I haven't signed a union card. Should I?**

As soon as you first walk through the doors at VICE Canada, you're automatically covered by the CMG collective agreement. That means all the work done over the years by your union colleagues is passed on to you.

You are required by law to pay dues, but you are not a member in good standing until you've signed a card. Signing a union card allows you to vote in Guild elections and run for an elected position in the union. Signing a card shows your interest in your colleagues and your working conditions and allows you to have a say in your union.

A CMG application is included in this kit for you to sign.

### **Why do I pay union dues?**

Union dues are an investment. Members contribute a small percentage of their earnings to a fund, much like you do with insurance premiums. When you need assistance, individually or as part of a group, there will be enough money to cover your needs. Whether the money is used for bargaining contracts or solving workplace problems, it's used to make your life better down the road. And the best part is, the money will be there when you need it the most.

Your union dues are 1.55 percent of your earnings at VICE Canada, up to a maximum of \$1,500 a year. Your dues automatically come off your pay. The amount is tax deductible, so it even shaves a bit off when you do your taxes each year.

### **Should I be worried seniority will rule the day when it comes to layoffs?**

The Guild and VICE Canada have agreed on a formal process for laying off—and recalling—workers. Layoffs do not go by seniority but rather by availability of work for positions.

The union is there to protect everyone's rights equally. It's the Guild's job to protect you from being let go unfairly. If you are let go legitimately, you will receive no less than the severance package negotiated by the Guild.

Without these rules, it would be too easy for managers to play favourites or make arbitrary decisions about who's no longer the flavour of the month. If managers could target specific employees during a layoff, no one would have job security at VICE.

One thing to keep in mind is that no one likes to see layoffs. That holds true for the Guild and management. Before any layoffs occur, CMG representatives meet with management to look at all possible ways to avoid or minimize them. Further, if there are layoffs, VICE Canada must also seek expressions of interest from remaining staff for a voluntary layoff in an effort to reduce the number of people laid off involuntarily.

### **Does joining the union mean I'll go on strike?**

We certainly hope not. The main goal of having a union in the workplace is to negotiate fair working conditions and rules for everyone. Neither management nor the union wants to get into a fight that could result in a strike.

As long as the collective agreement is in force—even after the expiry date printed on the cover—both sides have agreed not to impose a strike or lockout. Neither kind of work stoppage can occur until a number of legal requirements are met. It's worth noting that about 98 per cent of all collective agreements in Canada are successfully negotiated without any kind of work stoppage.

That's not to say the Guild wouldn't go on strike if it had to. The ability to withhold labour is a major tool at workers' disposal. After all, it's your labour! Because of that, CMG never uses it recklessly. CMG has never gone on strike, nor been locked out, at VICE Canada.

### **The more the merrier!**

CMG is the only union that represents VICE Canada employees, but it's not the only union that represents VICE employees everywhere. It's important to remember this, since different unions have negotiated different working conditions. Some practices or rules apply to some employees but not to others. For example, VICE employees working in the US have four separate unions with their own collective bargaining agreements and provisions therein.

The best thing to do is to read your collective agreement carefully and follow the rules. It's worth noting what the other unions' rules are, just to make for a more cohesive

workplace. Even though the union names are different, we are all focused on one common goal: ensuring your rights are protected and enforced.

### **Fear not!**

Take a peek at Article 24 of your collective agreement. Here you'll see that in the workplace your right to be active within the Guild will be respected. You should not feel nervous or afraid to stick up for your rights or become part of the union by taking part in committees or running for an elected position. These rules are in place to take care of you and to ensure a better working environment. Definitely feel proud that you're a card-carrying member. You can also feel relieved knowing your boss and managers respect your right to be involved with your union.

### **Learning the ropes**

Once you step through the doors on your first day, you should know your learning is only beginning. Your union and management agree training is critical to your success.

You're expected to grow in your new position. But you should know that even though training is available, resources are finite. You might not be whisked off to Brooklyn for training as a matter of course, but the possibility of training is definitely within your grasp. Management wants you to succeed as much as you do, and online training sessions open to staff globally are regular occurrences at VICE. It's of course beneficial to members to feel like they are adequately equipped to do their jobs in a constantly changing work environment. It's great to see there are opportunities for you to improve and strengthen your skills.

### **Will I get paid during training?**

For sure! This is how it works: If you're receiving training during normal work hours, you'll be paid your normal wage. If training takes place on a normal day off, you will be paid for that too at the normal daily rate. Down the road, you may be asked to help train other employees—and yes, you get paid for that too.

Training is such an important issue that VICE managers and the union discuss it regularly, in terms of what kinds of development should be offered as well as how it can be properly funded.

### **What kind of employee am I?**

Here are the different types of employment at VICE:

- Permanent employees (full-time or part-time)
- Contract employees
- Casual employees (not covered by the collective agreement)

Here's an overview:

**Permanent (full-time) employee:** If you work full-time hours, and don't fall into any of the other categories, then you can safely assume you're a full-time employee. Full-time employees are entitled to benefits, including a generous top-up for parental leave.

**Contract employee:** A contract employee can be hired to work on a specific project for a specific period of time, or to replace (or “backfill”) another employee who is away on sick leave, vacation, maternity leave, etc. Generally speaking, a contractor is treated the same as their colleagues, but there are a few exceptions due to the fact that employment isn’t continuous. For example, instead of earning vacation time, contractors earn 6 percent vacation pay, and in lieu of benefits they are entitled to up to 4 percent of their pay. Also, contract employees will become permanent if they continue to be employed for more than 12 consecutive months. If you’re not sure what your entitlements are, look in the collective agreement or talk to a member of your CMG executive.

**Student placements:** If you are an intern, congrats on landing a placement at VICE. You are here to learn and you have every right to know what’s expected of you and what kinds of things you can expect to accomplish during your work term. And no, it doesn’t mean you have to go get coffee—at least not all the time. You’re not left to fly alone. A VICE staffer will be there to take you under their wing. And don’t fear you’ll be thrown to the wolves on the first day. The contract states you’re there to learn and not to take away work normally done by unionized employees.

Be sure to know where you fit. Each position holds different rights. Check out complete employment details for these positions in Article 19 of your collective agreement.

### **Am I on probation?**

New VICE members normally go through a six-month probation period, to make sure there’s a good “fit” between the employee and the position. During this probationary period VICE has the right to “release,” or fire, the employee without having to show cause like they normally would under the law.

### **Important words to know: Performance Management**

It’s critical that you know how you’re doing at your job. Everyone needs goals and guidelines. Performance Management is meant to answer the question: “How am I doing at my job?” You will be asked as part of a quarterly check-in to complete a self-reflection in Culture Amp, and consider your accomplishments and goals.

Performance Management also involves a more formal discussion between you and your manager. During this meeting (usually in the spring) you will be given feedback and should be told what’s expected of you in the position you’re performing. After that, you and your manager will talk about ways to make sure you have the support you need to reach the organization’s objectives and achieve your own professional goals. Regular communication with your manager will help you realize your potential and enjoy your work even more.

### **Performance Improvement**

Even after the end of the probationary period and after spending some time in the job, sometimes an employee will have difficulty meeting the requirements of the job day in and day out. It’s tough to be on the wrong track, especially when you’re doing your best

to succeed. Having trouble in your job doesn't mean you're a troublemaker or that you aren't trying hard enough. This is why it's important to have a plan in motion that will help you improve.

Your supervisor will let you know there are certain areas where your work isn't making the grade. This can be tough to hear but important to know. Then you'll both come up with an action plan for how to improve.

Don't forget that your union is here to help. CMG is at your side from start to finish, ensuring the process is followed properly and you're given the opportunity to get yourself back on track.

### **Salaries**

Money is a serious topic. What you should know before starting at VICE Canada is that you don't necessarily have to start at the salary listed in the collective agreement, which are minimums only. If you have experience in your field, make sure you say so. That could go a long way toward getting a higher salary. Ultimately it will be VICE that decides what your salary will be, but it can never hurt to sell yourself.

### **Will I get a raise?**

The simple answer is yes. In fact, most employees get a salary increase every year. There is usually an across the board increase negotiated by the union.

One more important point: you'll notice that in the pay grid the wages shown are minimums. That means that VICE can't pay you any less than those amounts. They can pay more if they want to.

### **What are my hours?**

As a CMG member with VICE you have the flexibility to set your own hours (self-assigned).

As a CMG member you will normally work a 40-hour week.

### **Breaks and meals**

CMG employees are allowed two reasonable break periods a day: one in the first four hours of your shift, and one in the second half. The definition of "reasonable" isn't given, but use your common sense. Walking to a nearby coffee shop, buying a drink and a snack, and walking back is reasonable. Taking the subway across town probably isn't reasonable.

You're also entitled to a one-hour **unpaid** meal break each day.

### **Overtime**

If you are a scheduled employee (ie. you have to show up at work at a fixed time most days) then you work eight hours a day, five days a week. Put another way, you work 80

hours in a two-week period. That's important to know as we explain how overtime works at VICE.

If you work more than 80 hours in a two-week period, provided that you have been given prior authorization, that additional time is compensated at time and a half (1.5) and you can take the cash or the time off. Don't work the hours unless you've been given prior authorization.

Calculation of the 80-hour, two-week period includes statutory holidays, sick days, vacation, and approved days off.

### **What does it mean to 'bank my time?'**

The additional hours you work (over and above the 80 hours in a two-week period) will be set aside in something you can picture as the imaginary Bank of VICE. You'll be paid for your regular work week and those extra overtime hours will be saved in a bank account until you and your manager decide on a date that's best for you to withdraw some of that valuable time.

If you don't take all that time off in a year, what's left will be paid out in cash.

Whenever you dip into this imaginary Bank of VICE, you'll have to pull it out in either half-day or full-day increments.

When you leave VICE, any time left in your bank account will be paid out.

Self-assigned employees (that's you if you set your own hours): There are definitely some perks to having a flexible work schedule. But the tradeoff for being able to set your own hours is you aren't entitled to overtime. Also, you won't be paid extra to work on a holiday.

Your typical 40-hour work week should be created through a joint process between you and your manager. If you're feeling your workload is too heavy don't be afraid to talk to your boss and ask for a review of your assignments and the time in which you are expected to complete them.

If you aren't happy with the results of the review, speak with a union rep. They'll look into the matter for you and it could end up being resolved at a joint meeting of union and management representatives.

### **Vacation and time off**

You may have only just started this job but that doesn't mean you shouldn't be thinking about your vacation time. The scoop with vacation is that you earn it no matter what.

There are some exceptions to how it can be used. If you're on contract, you'll get paid for your vacation time instead of actually getting time off.

## **Holidays**

If you've already looked at your contract to see which days you get off, you might have noticed something missing. Guild employees at VICE Canada don't automatically get Remembrance Day or Easter Monday off. Instead, the Guild has negotiated one "floater" day you can take off at almost any time for events like your birthday, or special occasions.

VICE Canada recognizes all the other Ontario statutory holidays, including Family Day.

If you're scheduled to work on a recognized holiday you'll be paid at a rate of 1.5 times your normal rate (unless you're a self-assigned employee, in which case a holiday is treated as any other work day).

In the summer months VICE usually offers some summer days, which are additional days off of your choosing that must be taken in June-August.

Here's how your annual leave entitlement works:

The more years you put in, the more vacation time you get.

If you've worked less than a year you get 1.25 days for every month you complete.

1-3 years of service: three weeks

4-9 years of service: four weeks

10+ years of service: five weeks

Due to the fact some shows take a break over the summer and at Christmas, VICE encourages Guild members working in production to take their vacation during these breaks.

If business prevents you from taking all of your vacation time in the current year, you may carry over unused days until June 30 of the next calendar year. And if you still can't take the days off, VICE may either require you to take some time off or pay you for any unused vacation. See Article 7 of the collective agreement for more details.

## **What do I do if I'm harassed or bullied at work?**

Just because you are the "new kid" doesn't mean you should have to deal with this. Starting a new job is tough enough. All employees should respect one another, and, in fact, there are policies in effect at VICE to deal with harassment and discrimination.

So how will I know if the policy deals with my situation? The bottom line is: if you feel you've been discriminated against or harassed, it's wrong. Your union rep is there to help. Take the time to read the collective agreement provisions on the issues of harassment.

Your contract allows you to speak up with confidence, and know you won't be punished for doing so. You shouldn't look at this as a career-ending move. There's zero tolerance



for discrimination or harassment. Your complaints will always be taken seriously. In fact, you might even be saving other employees from similar grief by stepping forward.

Sometimes the harasser and the victim are in the same union. The Guild has set up a policy to deal with this. Each union member involved in the grievance will be assigned their own union representative. That way you can feel safe sharing your side of the story without it getting out to the other side.

### **Do outside activities affect your work?**

As a VICE employee you're allowed to do other work (and make a few bucks along the way) as long as it doesn't conflict with your day job. It's usually a good idea to talk things over with your union rep or supervisor before accepting any outside work. If you're not sure whether the outside work is a conflict, check out the letter of agreement near the back of your collective agreement.

After being hired by VICE Canada you will be required to review your activities and identify any real or potential conflicts of interest. When in doubt, check it out.

### **Union leave**

Both VICE Canada and CMG know there are plenty of opportunities for you to take part in union activities. Depending on the assignment, financial support could be available to you. You can find out more information in your collective agreement. It's understood that as a CMG member there's a possibility you'll need to be released from work to take part in: union meetings or conventions, or even to work on special projects (like this handbook). If you are released from work for Guild activities, you will continue to earn your salary.

### **What can I do to make the union stronger?**

A union, like all successful organizations, is mostly the sum of its parts. The union isn't a third party; it is you and your colleagues joined in common cause. CMG allows workers to address workplace issues—such as pay, hours of work, health and safety, pensions, and benefits—together.

Think of the union as a health club. By only paying dues to a gym, you won't improve your health or get into shape. You pay to get access to the equipment or tools needed to improve your health... but your health won't actually improve until you make use of that equipment. To see results, you must play an active part in the process. In order to actually make a difference in your workplace *it must start with you.*

Talk to someone on your location union executive about how you can help make the Guild stronger.

### **Does the union do any training?**

It's one thing to want to become active within your union, but that's only half the battle. You need to be equipped to handle the challenges that come with being a Guild volunteer. That means you'll need to understand your contract. You'll also want to learn

some tips on how to talk with your manager or supervisor. You might need to learn how to file a grievance. And you should also possess some basic negotiating skills. The Guild offers courses in all these areas. Check out the Guild website to see what courses are available and when they are offered.

### **Getting to know the Guild**

Your union rep could be someone you work with every day.

If you have a question or concern about something in your workplace, the first person you'll want to contact is someone on your local executive.

The union executive at VICE Canada currently has two co-chairs. They are there to help you, confidentially if need be. Remember, there are no stupid questions.

If you're not sure who sits on your local executive, just ask someone. Or click over to the VICE Canada page on the CMG website at [cmg.ca](http://cmg.ca). It lists all the names and contact information for people who are waiting to help you.

### **Committee (NEC)**

The VICE branch president sits on the Canadian Media Guild national executive. This committee addresses issues of importance to the union as a whole, taking into account concerns from all the workplaces in which the Guild has a presence.

It consists of representatives from each Guild branch. It also has several positions elected by all Guild members (including director of new members, director of education, and director of small branches).

Among other things, it is up to the NEC to:

- develop national administrative policies and make sure they are followed;
- maintain a national communications strategy to inform all union members of union activities;
- approve any strike request from a branch before it is passed on for further approval, and to approve all arbitrations and legal action;
- develop relationships with other unions and national and international labour organizations.

The NEC is chaired by a president who is the chief executive officer of the Guild. The president is paid by the Guild on a full-time basis while holding office. For the latest contact information for the NEC, go to the [CMG website](http://cmg.ca).

### **CMG Staff**

CMG has a number of paid employees who can help with any questions you might have. The Guild maintains four offices across the country, including in Toronto and Ottawa.

Staff representatives support the work of elected Guild officials and volunteers. The staff representative assigned to work with VICE does change from time to time, but your executive members can always let you know who is currently working with them. Staff representatives provide support on joint committees and assist with bargaining and contract compliance, as well as with issues such as grievances and benefits.

Staff in the national office includes a membership co-ordinator, a travel co-ordinator who also arranges releases from work for union activities, a webmaster, and a communications co-ordinator.

To get in touch with CMG staff, visit [www.cmg.ca/en/contact/staff/](http://www.cmg.ca/en/contact/staff/), or call the national office at 416-591-5333 or 1-800-465-4149.

### **How can I find out about union events?**

CMG often sends out emails to the address listed on your union card (which should be a personal email and not your work one) about upcoming activities and events. The Guild's [website](#) is also updated regularly. Plus, once every two years CMG holds a convention; members like you can become delegates and help set the Guild's priorities for the coming years.

### **How did the Canadian Media Guild end up being my union?**

VICE Canada employees chose CMG as their union when they first voted to organize. CMG represents thousands of employees in the media industry across Canada; because of its experience in improving working conditions for producers, directors, hosts, reporters, and others, and its history of securing and defending the rights of media workers, CMG seemed like the right fit for similar VICE employees too. The Guild's first collective agreement with VICE allowed many employees to obtain full-time permanent status—something that had been impossible for years—along with a full range of benefits. Life isn't perfect, and there are improvements that we still want and need to have, but we've got a solid base to build on. With your help, we'll succeed.

We wish you well in your career here at VICE and as a member of CMG.