

Welcome!

This book is for you because your new job at The Canadian Press makes you part of another dynamic team, the Canadian Media Guild -- CMG or the Guild for short.

The Canadian Media Guild is one of the fastest-growing and strongest media union locals in the country. Our members also work for media companies like TVOntario, Reuters, the CBC, BuzzFeed and the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network.

If this is your first unionized workplace and you don't come from a family with union ties, you may be asking yourself a question or two. What does a union mean to me? Will the union tell me what I can and can't do at work? When do we go on strike?

Starting a new job can be overwhelming. The last thing you need is a bunch of unanswered questions about your union.

This handbook is meant to answer some basic questions and encourage you to embrace the CMG as an incredibly valuable organization. Think of the Guild 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.

Mike Blanchfield
President of The Canadian Press/Pagemasters Branch
of the Canadian Media Guild

What is a union for?

If you've been a member of a union before you know most of this but, if you haven't, let's start with the basics.

A union is simply an organized group of workers who come together to pool resources (time, money, brain power) and bargain with their employer.

Working together, they can help preserve respect on the job, earn good wages, get health benefits, ensure safe working conditions and generally just get treated fairly.

A union also is certified by law to represent workers. That means an employer must sit down and negotiate with the union, where an individual who walks in and asks for a raise can simply be turned away without comment.

The company also is obligated to follow the rules set out in the collective agreement, often just referred to as the contract, once one is negotiated. To breach any section of the contract is akin to breaking the "law" of the workplace.

Both the union and its members have an obligation to ensure any failure by the employer to live up to the provisions of the collective agreement is immediately challenged and rectified. This is called defending the contract and it's one of the main jobs of any union.

Why do I need a union?

Unions are as important today as they were at the turn of the 20th century, when workers were fighting the use of child labour, starvation wages and long hours that sometimes stretched from before dawn to well after dark.

You've likely heard the phrase "strength in numbers." Well, that speaks directly to the usefulness of a union – even in today's workplace.

Suppose you have a problem at work. Maybe your boss is being unfair or expects you not to file overtime. Would you rather deal with it alone – as you would in a non-union workplace – or with the support of your colleagues at The Canadian Press?

Being a member of the Guild and working under a collective agreement also provides some job security. All unions work to ensure that everyone is treated equally. Seniority rights are part of that.

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, without fear that a newcomer who works for less can replace you at any time. The employer wins too, because a happy employee is a productive employee.

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

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

As soon as you walk through the door at CP for the very first time, you're automatically covered by the CMG collective agreement. That means you reap the benefit of all the work done over the years by your union colleagues to improve wages and working conditions. The union is required to represent you as it does every other employee.

Because of this, you are required by law to pay dues but you are not a member in good standing of the union until you've also signed a membership 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, your working conditions and allows you to have a say in the running of your union.

It also allows you to show your friends and relatives that you're proud to be a union member. A CMG application is included in this kit for you to sign.

Why do I pay union dues?

Consider union dues 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.

The money supports bargaining contracts and solving workplace problems. It pays for union staff and volunteers, who take time off work to make your life better. And the money will be there when you need it the most. In case of a strike or lockout, a rare occurrence at CMG, members can draw on an international strike fund containing hundreds of millions of dollars. It pays a weekly amount to help with the loss of a paycheque.

The Canadian Media Guild, while large, is still what is know as a union local and is part of a larger national and international union which makes the Guild much stronger.

Your union dues are 1.55 per cent of your earnings at CP. Your dues automatically come off your pay. The amount is tax deductible, so that helps shave a bit off what you have to send every year to Revenue Canada.

Some of the money stays with CMG, some goes to our national union (CWA Canada) in Ottawa to help pay expenses and some goes to the headquarters of CWA in Washington to support things like the strike fund.

CWA stands for Communications Workers of America. It represents people in many sectors, including the media. You're joining a union that has members at The New York Times, ABC and the Washington Post, just to name a few employers, as well as many newspapers in Canada and of course the CBC, the largest branch in CMG.

Should I be worried about seniority if it comes to layoffs?

The Guild and CP have agreed on a formal process for laying off – and recalling – workers.

The union is there to protect everyone's rights equally. It's the Guild's job to protect you from being let go unfairly. And 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 based on 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 CP. So yes, seniority is a first consideration.

One thing to keep in mind is that no one likes layoffs. That holds true for the Guild and management. Before they occur, CMG representatives meet with management to look at all possible ways to avoid or minimize layoffs. That could include early retirement incentives or seeking volunteers to leave, 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.

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. And 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 would never go on strike. The ability to withhold labour is a pretty big stick. Because of that, the CMG never uses it recklessly. Before a strike can be called members must approve strike action through a national vote. But just having that

approval in their back pocket can help a Guild bargaining committee negotiate better wages and working conditions when the contract is up for renewal.

Fear Not!

Canadian labour laws protect your right both to be a member and to be active within your union. You should not feel nervous or afraid to stick up for your rights, or take on a leadership role. The more members who agree to take part in committees or work for the benefit of the union in other ways, the stronger the union becomes.

Feel proud to be a union member and more on that later.

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

Employees at The Canadian Press were the founding members of The Canadian Media Guild in 1949. Back then it was called the Canadian Wire Service Guild. Employees at the CBC soon joined with their colleagues at CP and at the CBC they managed to negotiate a first contract.

Things did not go as well for workers at the national wire service. Laws were different then and the newspapers that controlled CP were anti-union and refused to negotiate. Eventually they managed to break the union at CP and it decertified in 1951.

The Canadian Wire Service Guild continued however with CBC employees and others soon joined, such as Reuters Canada. Flash forward about 25 years. After trying to build support for many years, union activists CP succeeded in 1975 when 65 per cent of employees signed cards and rejoined the union local they founded in 1949.

The employer hadn't changed much. CP still refused to bargain in good faith. But this time a strike in 1976 showed that workers meant business and a first contract was signed.

How the union works

The president of The Canadian Press/Pagemasters Branch sits on the Canadian Media Guild National Executive Committee or NEC. So do all the other branch presidents within CMG, plus a few others from some branches, and national officers elected at large: president, vice-president, treasurer, new members director, education director, small branches director.

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 national president is chairperson of the NEC and 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, visit <https://www.cmg.ca/en/contact/branch-leadership/cp/> to see who is an elected officer where you work. They can help you get settled in.

CMG Staff

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

Staff representatives support the work of elected Guild officials and volunteers. Other administrative staff in the national office in Toronto also help keep the wheels rolling.

To get in touch with the right CMG staff member, visit <https://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?

There are bulletin boards in your office exclusively for Guild information. Check them periodically, and ask your local reps about activities when you have a chance to chat at the office.

The Guild's website at www.cmg.ca is also updated regularly. Plus, once every two years the CMG holds a convention; members like you can become delegates and help set the Guild's priorities for the coming years.

Now that you know what it means to be a union member, what does it mean to work at The Canadian Press?

What kind of employee am I?

Here are the different types of employment offered at CP:

- Full-time employee
- Part-time employee
- Temporary employee
- Outside funded employee
- Interns

Full-time employee:

This one's the easiest. If you work full-time hours (35 a week) and haven't been told you fall into any of the other categories, then you can safely assume you're a permanent full-time employee.

Part-time employee:

Part-time employees work 28 hours or less per week. They too are considered permanent employees, after they work a total of 500 hours, and are subject to rules about layoffs and dismissals which provide some job security.

They also earn the same salary as full-time employees for the hours they work. To learn more, the rules for part-time employees are found in Article 31 of the CP collective agreement.

Temporary employees:

A temporary employee is a full-time employee hired to work on a specific project for a specific period of time, or perhaps to replace (or "backfill") another employee who is away on sick leave, vacation, or maternity leave.

They cannot be paid less than the minimum weekly salary for their position in the collective agreement. Generally speaking, they cannot be hired for a period of more than six months, except when they are replacing a permanent employee on leave for a longer period. More information can be found in Article 32 of the collective agreement.

Outside funded employee:

The Guild has agreed on a case-by-case basis to allow CP to hire people through programs offered by companies such as Google and Facebook. The terms of those arrangements are worked out between the employer and the union and are spelled out in contracts provided to those employees.

Interns

Internships are short-term placements of students, such as those at a journalism school. They don't pay dues and the rules are spelled out in the contract. They are there to learn and not to take away work normally done by unionized employees. They don't get paid a regular salary and receive only a small stipend.

If, for any reason, they are asked to do work that might normally have been done by a regular employee they must be paid and treated as a temporary employee under Article 32. They cease to be interns.

Am I on probation?

At CP, most new employees are on probation for their first three months on the job. In some cases, the employer may ask the employee to extend probation for another month and will notify the Guild.

Employees on probation can be dismissed for any reason and there is nothing the union can do about it. Programmers are on probation for six months, unless the employer agrees to shorten the period.

Once probation ends, the employee is on staff and their seniority starts with their initial date of hire, including the probationary period.

Salaries

Money is obviously a big issue for workers and their union. What you should know before starting at CP is that you don't have to start at the bottom of the salary ladder. You can receive credit for experience in a similar job at another employer and move to a higher step on the salary grid. Also, the union only negotiates minimum salaries. There is nothing to stop you from asking for more, although there is no obligation on the part of the employer to say yes. Basic salaries are set out in Schedule "A" of the contract.

Will I get a raise?

If you don't start at the top of the salary grid, you will move up one step each year on the anniversary date of your hiring, until you get to the final step after five years.

Additional raises for all employees may be negotiated by the Guild when the contract comes up for renewal. The usual practice is to apply a percentage increase to the entire salary grid in each new year of the contract.

But that does not stop you from asking for more on an individual basis. At CP such discretionary increases are called merit pay. If you look around your office, some of your colleagues may very well be receiving merit pay but it is entirely up to CP whether to grant these discretionary increases.

What are my hours and what about overtime?

Article 16 sets out in detail hours of work and overtime for different classifications of employees at CP but, in general, the workweek is 35 hours with a normal workday of seven hours, spread over a maximum period of eight hours, including an unpaid lunch break.

If you work more than seven hours, you are entitled to 1½ times your regular pay for the additional time. If you work on a scheduled day off you are entitled to regular overtime and if you work on a second scheduled day off you are entitled to double your regular salary for that period.

The rules for IT employees are more detailed but the basic work week remains the same. Averaged employees are also subject to different rules set out in Letter of Understanding No. 15 in the back of the contract.

Shift premiums

If you're required to work nights, overnights or weekends you also receive premiums:

- Seven per cent for each night shift (any work between 7 p.m. and 6 a.m.) with a minimum of two, even if you work only one
- Eight per cent of weekly salary if even one shift is worked overnight (any work between 3:59 a.m. and 6 a.m.)
- Six and a half per cent on weekends (any work between 3 a.m. Saturday and 3 a.m. Monday). Weekend premiums are paid in addition to any night over-overnight premiums.

What does it mean to “bank my time”?

When you earn overtime, you don't have to take it in cash and pay income tax on it. You can bank your time up to a maximum of 105 hours and take it off later a time that suits both you and CP. Read Article 16 for the details.

Vacation and Time off

Statutory Holidays

Let's start with stats. Because Canadian Press employees work all across the country there are some variations in which statutory holidays they receive. These are set out in the collective agreement and reprinted below.

New Year's Day (**all**)

Third Monday in February (none)

Good Friday (**all**)

Victoria Day/**Patriots' Day in Quebec (all)**

June 24, Fête Nationale (Quebec only)

Canada Day (**all**)

First Monday in August (all except Atlantic Provinces and Quebec)

Labour Day (**all**)

Thanksgiving Day (**all**)

Remembrance Day (**Atlantic Provinces**)

Christmas Day (**all**)

Boxing Day (**all**)

Employees regularly employed in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia shall receive Boxing Day in lieu of

Third Monday in February. Ontario employees shall receive the First Monday in August in lieu of the Third Monday in February.

Also, each full-time employee who has completed probation as outlined in Article 6.01 of this Agreement shall receive two (2) additional recognized holidays during each calendar year, **prorated by major fraction in the first calendar year**, to be taken on days to be agreed on between the employee and their supervisor or, if necessary, to replace a provincial holiday mandated by law.

If you work on a recognized holiday, you get a premium of one-half (½) times basic salary and a lieu day off with pay. If a day off is not scheduled, you get a further premium in the amount of one and one-half (1½) times basic salary for a day.

Christmas and New Year's Eve are different. Work Christmas Day **and** you get double time and half for the day **plus** an extra day off with pay. Work a night shift on Christmas Eve or New Year's Eve and you get double time and a half, even though they're not recognized holidays.

Vacations

Here's how your annual leave entitlement works:

The more years you put in, the more vacation time you get. The vacation year starts on January 1 and ends on December 31. Employees take their vacation during the year in which it is earned. For all the details refer to Article 17 in the contract.

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

Less than five years service: three weeks

From 5-12 years service: four weeks

From 12-24 years service: five weeks

And 24 years or more: six weeks

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 sort of treatment. You have a right to expect respect from managers and fellow employees alike and there are policies and laws when conduct crosses certain lines. Talk to your union representative about your situation if you have concerns.

Sometimes the alleged harasser and victim are in the union. The Guild has 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?

You are entitled to perform some outside work provided it does not conflict with the work you do for CP. Check the specifics with your boss to see if it is permitted. If you feel the employer's objections are unfair, talk to your union representative. It is also possible some other outside activities may conflict with your job, even if they are unpaid. Be open about anything you think might be a conflict.

Training

You were hired based on the experience, skills and education you brought to the table. If the employer wants you to learn new systems or skills it is up to the employer to ensure you are properly trained.

In addition, if there is something you think might make you a better employee, you may be able to get CP to cover half the cost of a training course you would take on your own time. Ask for approval.

From time to time the union also offers courses to help develop the skills needed to be a union volunteer or officer. Ask about these if you are interested and see below.

Volunteering and union leave

The union is as strong as its members want it to be and volunteering is one way to build that strength. There are many committees that need union members to participate, not just union staff. And, if you decide to help the union by offering your time, it need not entirely be at your expense.

Some volunteer work, on joint national committees with the employer, for example, are paid by the employer. Others may involve leave granted by the employer and may be paid by the Guild. Read Article 7 for all the details.

Talk to someone who is active in the Guild about what you might do. Every Location Unit has an executive committee. You can check on the CMG website to see who is a member and can give you more information, or just ask another employee.