

Historic Moment for CWA Canada

In 2006, after a long process, CWA authorized CWA Canada to act with full autonomy, guaranteeing Canadians full control over their own governance, operations, and policies.



MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING REGARDING CWA OPERATIONS IN CANADA

The Communications Workers of America is an international union seeking to unite workers it represents to improve their working conditions and standards by building alliances and pan-world organizations to combat the power of large multi-national corporations and the evils of "globalization." As a progressive, large and important union the CWA is at the forefront of this fight: we belong to, and in many cases, lead many international union associations and industry groups.

The underlying principle of building a truly international union must be a solid partnership between the Canadian and American sides of the CWA. The border may separate the rules under which labor operates but it should not stop all areas of co-operation and help between us. Our joint focus must be serving our members and taking on the multi-national companies that are well established in both countries. We have differing experiences, approaches and best practices that can be shared for the common good.

Toward that end we must move to a new CWA structure that builds that partnership. The CWA in Canada should operate within a structural framework which recognizes its own national context instead of the situation now where its membership is divided between two districts dominated by US members. Why? For starters there are different legal and political frameworks in both countries. One example: Canadian members are under the labor jurisdiction of 11 different governments (the federal and 10 provincial ones) none of which have anything to do with the U.S. Department of Labor. The rules for organizing, dispute resolution, and work stoppages are widely different and more favorable to labor in Canada than in the U.S.

The Canadian side of the CWA is small in numbers now but has good potential for growth. Through organizing during the past few years it has grown at a much faster pace than other areas within the CWA. Belonging to a truly international union with more Canadian members and presence will make CWA in Canada even more attractive to potential new members. We have more than doubled in size over the past ten years and expect our growth to continue.

Building a strong truly international union will take time, goodwill, experiment and care. But to get to a union whose traditions, culture and symbols fairly represent our members in our two neighboring but different countries is a goal worth aiming for.

1. In order to accomplish this task within the existing governance structure of the CWA guided by the Constitution, the Communications Workers of America shall approve the authority for TNG-CWA Canada to act with full autonomy to make all governance, policy and operational decisions affecting Canadian members in accordance with the Constitution of the CWA through a Canadian Region. TNG-CWA Canada will continue as an autonomous entity within The Newspaper Guild and the CWA.
2. The President with the concurrence of the Vice Presidents of District 1 and District 7 and The Newspaper Guild shall assign to the elected national Director of TNG-CWA Canada all administrative and constitutional obligations. The Director shall act in the best interests of the Union in accordance with the CWA Constitution.
3. The Canadian Region will be financially self-sufficient. Per capita from Canadian members will remain in Canada, where they will be administered by TNG-CWA Canada to fund its programs and operations. TNG-CWA Canada and its locals will continue to participate in the Member Relief Fund. TNG-CWA Canada and its locals will continue to participate in the CWA Defense Fund. The CWA Executive Board shall continue to approve all expenditures from the Defense Fund consistent with Fund rules.

4. Arrangements for TNG-CWA Canada's expenses for its membership in TNG are to be agreed upon by the two groups as will decisions concerning the position of TNG-CWA Canada within the Sector, including any shared costs and any Canadian contributions to CWA beyond the MRF and Defense Fund. TNG-CWA Canada will participate in the appropriate strategic industry funds once they are established by the CWA.
5. All financial and other records pertaining to the Locals of TNG-CWA Canada will be maintained and administrated by TNG-CWA Canada's head office. TNG-CWA Canada will finance and run its own legal program for its Locals as is done now through the CWA legal program. TNG-CWA Canada will provide an annual audit to the CWA Secretary-Treasurer. TNG-CWA Canada will work with CWA Secretary-Treasure to verify voting strengths in international elections.
6. TNG-CWA Canada members will continue to have all rights of membership in the CWA and participate in all appropriate CWA elections, including those for the TNG-CWA Executive Council, IUE-CWA Executive Board and CWA international officers. TNG-CWA Canada members will be eligible to sit on any of the various committees set up by CWA.
7. Any formal disputes between members and their Locals will be heard by the Director of TNG-CWA Canada and, if not resolved, will be forwarded to the CWA President under the same appeal process available to any CWA member.
8. The CWA Executive Board shall, as it does now, approve all strikes on the effective recommendation of the Director of TNG-CWA Canada.
9. This Agreement shall require ratification by the Canadian membership.
10. An appropriate transition period shall be established to ensure the effective operation of TNG-CWA Canada under this new system

Signed,

LARRY COHEN
President

BARBARA EASTERLING
Secretary/Treasurer

JEFFREY RECHENBACH
Executive Vice President

CHRIS SHELTON
Vice President
District 1

ANNIE HILL
Vice President
District 7

LINDA FOLEY
Vice President
The Newspaper Guild

ARNOLD AMBER
Director
TNG-CWA Canada

GORDON HOLDER
Treasurer
TNG-CWA Canada

LOIS KIRKUP
Secretary
TNG-CWA Canada

MARTIN O'HANLON
Deputy Director
TNG-CWA Canada

This was then enshrined in the CWA Constitution

Article XI—Districts and the Canadian Region Section 8 — The Canadian Region

CWA-SCA Canada shall operate as an autonomous entity within the TNG-CWA Sector and the CWA, through a Canadian Region, with regard to governance, policy and operational decisions affecting Canadian members. The Canadian Region will be financially self-sufficient and all expenses incurred by the operations of the Region will be borne by the Region. CWA-SCA Canada members will have all rights of membership in the Union and will be eligible for appointment to any Union Committees. CWA-SCA Canada will provide an annual audit report to the CWA Secretary-Treasurer. All financial records and other records pertaining to the Locals of CWA-SCA Canada will be maintained and administered by the Canadian Region. The Canadian Region shall abide by all provisions of the CWA Constitution.