



OTTAWA NEWSPAPER GUILD
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MINUTES: Executive Meeting
Wednesday, December 12, 2012

1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order by Debbie Cole at 10:05 a.m.

In attendance: Peter Bennet, Rob Bostelaar, Debbie Cole, Tony Cote, Gord Holder, Lois Kirkup, Joanne Laucius, Julie Oliver, Jeff Parks.

Absent: Jacquie Miller, CTV Ottawa, Delta and DLR reps.

2. Approval of Agenda

M/ by Lois Kirkup to approve agenda. S/ by Joanne Laucius. CARRIED.

3. Secretary's Report

(a) Executive Committee - Good Standing Report: All regular members in good standing.

(b) Adoption of Minutes: M/ by Gord Holder to adopt the November 20, 2012 Minutes. S/ by Joanne Laucius. CARRIED.

(c) Correspondence: Ottawa & District Labour Congress sent notice of a bus scheduled to travel to Toronto for Ontario Federation of Labour's Rally for Rights and Democracy on Jan. 26, 2013. CWA/SCA Canada director Martin O'Hanlon sent notice encouraging all locals to hold holiday season event as a way to mobilize members; said national arm of union would cover some or all of the costs. Thank you card received from University of Ottawa's Fulcrum student newspaper participants in ONG mentor event in November.

(d) Congratulations and Condolences:

- Donation to Shepherds of Good Hope Foundation in memory of Donald Egan, father of Kelly Egan (Citizen/Editorial).
- Advised by CWA Canada director of death in family of Member-at-Large Dave Esposti.

4. Treasurer's Report

(a) Financial Report: (attachment) Treasurer Peter Bennet reported that the audit of the 2011-12 fiscal year statements had been completed by Bouris Wilson LLP; he described it as a clean audit, meaning no concerns were raised by the auditors. The audited statements showed that the Defence Fund surplus for the year was \$75,000, down about \$21,000 from year previous, chiefly because of higher expenses related to arbitrations.

The General Fund surplus was reported at \$10,000; revenue had dropped \$13,000 from the year previous, but expenses were also down by \$10,000.

Treasurer Peter Bennet also reported that there was a small surplus of \$385 for the month of November. Keeping in mind the projected deficit budget, he said there was no need for the local to panic, but the executive would have to continue to look at reducing expenses to match the decrease in dues revenue over the long term.

5. **Unit Reports**

a) CTV Ottawa:

Co-chairs John Hua and Jonathan Rotondo were not at the executive meeting, but had previously submitted a written report on a meeting with station management.

The theme of the report was that parent BellMedia was rolling out an initiative to make digital news and websites as the priority.

The impact on ONG members was expected to be:

- i) The web reporting positions (one full-time and one part-time) were eliminated effective immediately. The full-time member was already on LTD, and things were to continue until they were deemed ready to return to work, at which point it was assumed member would be laid off.
- ii) Staff who had other job functions, but functioned part-time in web reporting roles would lose those shifts, unless they were already scheduled, in which case they would be reshifted to report for news.
- iii) Effective Nov. 28, reporters would be expected to file for the website on a continuous basis and from the field. Unit chairs asked that ONG members with relevant web experience be placed in positions to guide and train co-workers.
- iv) The company had committed to providing reporters, desk staff and anchors with training.
- v) These changes were expected to mean longer hours and greater workloads, at least until the network figured out how to roll out the process. ONG members were aware of the need to file overtime claims as required.

Executive members' consensus was this sounded like a process similar to what Postmedia had employed at the Citizen.

b) DLR International:

CWA/SCA Canada staff rep Dave Wilson had talked to the company owner to discuss setting up a meeting for negotiations. The contract had expired in November 2012.

c) Delta Reprographics:

No report at meeting. Dues had been remitted by the company through October.

d) Ottawa Citizen

(a) Editorial - Freelance Bylines Tracking:

Unit Chair Jacquie Miller had given survey forms to most of those assisting with the tracking of freelance content in the month of December. Jacquie Miller was expected to do an assessment of the data and report back to the executive in the new year.

(b) Postmedia Network Retirement Plan:

President Debbie Cole reported on a meeting with company HR representatives in early December. Retiree Member-at-Large Tony Cote reported that, following the meeting, the company reps confirmed that the ONG was not in fact the designated representative for one former member who was in management and not in a unionized position as of Dec. 31, 2011. As well, it had been determined that spouses and survivors of pension plan members who had died would be able to register objections to the request for a 10-year solvency repayment plan.

Tony Cote also reported on a printed assessment of the Postmedia pension plan. The underfunding figure of \$30 million represented a shortfall for the company as a going concern, and it was this figure on which Postmedia wanted agreement for reducing its contributions; a \$126-million underfunding figure referred to the shortfall in the case of winding up the pension plan, and in that case different rules and formula were applied. Tony Cote also reported that retired former ONG members he had discussed the issue with had their own questions and wanted direction from the union and a recommendation on how they should vote.

He also reported that the Postmedia pension plan had 2,814 total members, including 596 current retirees and 1,615 current employees. The ONG had 119 members who were in the pension plan, and the Montreal Newspaper Guild had a similar number. Other retirees were in a Hollinger pension plan because that corporation owned the newspapers at that time. Senior company management members are not part of the Postmedia pension plan involved here.

President Debbie Cole reported that CWA/SCA Canada director Martin O'Hanlon had discussed the pension issue with a lawyer and a Postmedia representative. He was suggesting seeking four concessions in return for not objecting to the change in solvency repayment plans: creation of an advisory board for the pension plan, including union representation; a say in investment strategy; a commitment that there would not be any significant increases in employee contributions; and increased access to information about the pension plan. Martin O'Hanlon had also been told that Postmedia was discussing the creation of a website containing information for pension plan members.

A letter sent earlier to pension plan members had mentioned the company's required \$8-million annual contribution and a \$14-million additional contribution to address the shortfall. Based on a 10-year solvency plan, as the company was requesting, the annual contribution would drop by about \$3 million per year. Martin O'Hanlon and the lawyer asked the Postmedia official if \$3 million would drive the company into bankruptcy and was told no.

Member-at-Large Rob Bostelaar suggested it was crucial that ONG and CWA/SCA Canada work with other unions on this issue. Member-at-Large Lois Kirkup was to contact the president of the CEP local in Vancouver.

Tony Cote noted that ONG did not represent retirees in any negotiations regarding pensions.

The ONG executive was to obtain more information on the pension issues and distribute it to members. That information was also to be posted on local and CWA/SCA Canada websites.

The pension issue was to be discussed at an ONG general membership meeting later on Dec. 12.

Citizen HR representatives had said a town hall meeting on the pension plan would likely take place in January.

The deadline for registering objections to Postmedia's application for an extended solvency catchup plan was Dec. 31, 2012.

(c) Former Member asked to fill in on Photo Desk:

A former ONG member who had been transferred out of the newsroom to a non-Guild department was being asked to fill in on the photo desk. President Debbie Cole and Secretary Gord Holder had discussed the issue at an early December meeting with HR. It was proposed that the company would pay dues on the estimated 20 per cent of the employees' hours that were devoted to photo desk duty. Company was also to track those hours and to report monthly to the ONG; if there were additional hours beyond 20 per cent, additional dues were to be paid.

Executive members also discussed the Driving Local section and Style magazine, which were being handled by non-editorial, non-Guild workers.

(d) There were three student apprentices from Carleton University in the Citizen newsroom as of mid-December. Consensus was that the executive seek a meeting with Citizen newsroom management to discuss the union's goal that such apprentices not be used to replace full-time reporters.

(e) Ramp Attendants: Given the company's announced change to handling inserts off-site, there was expected to be an impact on the six part-time ramp attendants who were ONG members. President Debbie Cole said at least two had asked about the possibility of buyouts, and notice of buyout potential was posted for all six members on Dec. 7. It was expected that 2-3 of the six members would be retained.

6. **Arbitrations**

■ Ottawa Citizen PT Cleaner Grievance - hearings scheduled for Dec. 11 and 13, 2012: Two days had been scheduled for the hearing of a grievance regarding a member of the Building Services department who was forced to use vacation days by the company after being refused permission to return to work following an illness. On the first day, the arbitrator asked if the union was amenable to settling the arbitration, and ONG reps said that had been our position as far back as February 2012. Parts of the company's position seemed to be based on a misunderstanding of what the ONG had been requesting with regard to requests for letters from physicians. There had been previous cases, such as members on LTD returning to work, in which return-to-work notes had been supplied. The grievance in this case was settled, with the member being given back two of the four days of vacation.

It was also agreed that, under certain circumstances, such as a return to work from extended sick leave or LTD, the company may request medical certificates for return to work. President Debbie Cole said the member was pleased with the settlement of the grievance.

It was also noted that the member, whose position at the Citizen is part-time, had another job with another company.

Following discussion: M/ by Tony Cote, S/ by Lois Kirkup. Resolved that any ONG member who was required to attend to union business by the ONG shall be compensated by ONG for lost wages and expenses related to other scheduled employment. CARRIED.

7. **Committees**

- (a) Personnel
- (b) Communications
- (c) Health & Safety
- (d) Grievance
- (e) Guild Awareness / Mobilization
- (f) Finance
- (g) Organizing
- (h) Elections
- (i) Bylaws
- (j) Retirees

8. **Internal Guild**

Honorarium: The budget approved in September 2012 had included an amount for the honoraria of only the four ONG table officers. However, the honoraria for calendar 2012 had been approved at a membership meeting in December 2011. Executive members affected by the conflicting resolutions were to notify Treasurer Peter Bennet on whether they would or would not accept an honoraria for the July-December 2012 period.

9. **Outside Issues**

10. **Other Business**

11. **Lost Time Notification:** Lost time for Peter Bennet, Rob Bostelaar, Debbie Cole, Lois Kirkup, Joanne Laucius, Julie Oliver, Jeff Parks.

12. **Upcoming Meetings:**

- Date/time for January 2013 Executive meeting: **Tuesday, January 15, 2013, 12 noon**, Guild office. However, an emergency teleconference/meeting to discuss the Postmedia pension issues was to be called before Dec. 31, if required.

13. **Adjournment**

M/ by Gord Holder to adjourn at 11:35 a.m. S/ by Peter Bennet. CARRIED.