Contract Highlights – Metro Bargaining Unit – August 3, 2016

Your bargaining team met management on a total of 12 days at the table, beginning April 19th and concluding after three days of "conciliation" talks with the assistance of the Ministry of Labour's senior mediator in the newspaper industry.

Your bargaining team unanimously recommends this negotiated renewal of the collective agreement for your approval.

As in all negotiations, the secret ballot question shall be:

> *Yes, I approve of the tentative collective agreement as recommended by my bargaining team*
>
> *No, I reject the tentative collective agreement and authorize my bargaining team to call a strike if necessary.*

1. Wages

- This is a two-year contract, expiring March 5 2018.

- There is no wage increase in the first year of the contract, i.e. March 6 2016 to March 5 2017. A lump sum payment of $450 (less deductions) shall be paid to each full time employee (and $150 for temporary employees).

- There shall be a general wage increase of 1% in the second year of the contact, effective March 6 2017. The 1% increase shall apply to all salaries including salary "above scale." The salary amounts on the wage grid shall also increase by 1%.

- The Reporter-Photographer wage grid is increased by approximately $4000 per year. This will not benefit any current permanent employees who are all "over scale," however it will benefit any future employees, especially temporary employees.

- A new job classification of Editorial Designer is created, filled by the employee who is currently doing the job. The dollar values are the same as the current Copy Editor grid.

- The copy editor and web editor job classifications are merged into a new "Editor" job at the salary rates of the higher Copy Editor grid.

- Four editorial management jobs have been included in the bargaining unit as "Associate Managing Editor" with a new salary grid. Laurie Wilson's Sports Editor job will also be classified as an AME.

2. Job Security

- The minimum “notice of termination” in the event of layoff of a permanent employee shall be increased from 5 calendar days to four weeks. This benefits everyone with less than four years’ service if laid off. Employees with four or more years of service would continue to benefit from the labour code requirements of one week of notice for each year of service to a maximum of eight weeks. The company continues to have the option of laying off immediately with “notice pay” or giving “working notice.”

- Severance pay (not to be confused with notice pay) continues to be available at the rate of two weeks’ pay for every year of service, however the “cap” is now increased from 26 to 30 weeks’ pay.

- Article 13.1 is clarified to ensure that union seniority is only credited for time spent in the Metro bargaining unit.

- The layoff procedure will now include (new article 14.7) an option for an employee who is under layoff notice to obtain an available job vacancy for which they are qualified. This new opportunity is in addition to the existing right to “bump” into another job that is occupied by a more junior employee.

3. Benefits

- The RRSP program is improved to include commission payments as part of the earnings basis for the 1.5% matching employer/employee contributions, up to a maximum of $100,000 income.

- Paid bereavement leave is improved by increasing the leave in event of the death of a brother/sister from a maximum of 3 days to a maximum of 5 days.

- A six-person union-management study committee is struck to investigate the possibility of an opt-in supplementary group benefits plan, based on a 100% employee-paid premium, for extra entitlements to items such as dental, vision, and massage therapy. The union will be represented by Howard Law, a member of the union bargaining team, and a third union rep. Any member interested in becoming the third rep should approach Emina Gamulin. [emina.gamulin@gmail.com]

4. Advertising Compensation

- The ACCC letter remains outside the collective agreement.

- The company has served notice that on January 1, 2017 the compensation plan design will move from targeted compensation to commission. MBOs will continue. Commission rate values are expected to change more frequently than before in response to changes in the sales mix.

- The ACCC process is enhanced with specific written commitments to providing overall and individual earnings projections as well as weekly report on individual revenue and earnings results. See Paragraph A of the Letter.

- The company has committed in writing to a "proportional" plan design, meaning that the design is intended to protect earning potential in a proportional relationship to changes in revenue. See Paragraph B(1) of the Letter.

- In the event of a major change in the plan, the company will provide the ACCC with overall and individual projections based upon multiple future scenarios of revenue and earnings outcomes. If either the scenario projections or the earning outcomes of the plan over time exceed a margin of error, the ACCC will meet to review what is wrong with the plan. See Paragraph B (2) of the Letter.

- Notice to the sales reps of major changes to the compensation plan is increased from 30 to 45 days.

- In the event of a significant change to either commission rates or account assignments, such that a sales reps' potential to earn commissions may be affected by 10% or more, the company has a written obligation to make reasonable efforts to mitigate the impact. A sales rep can bring this matter to the ACCC. See paragraphs C and D of the Letter.

- As the Letter is outside the collective agreement, any breach of the company's commitments is generally not subject to the grievance procedure. However we continue to have the right to file a grievance under article 2.2 of the collective agreement in the event of company decisions that are so bad or unfair that they are "arbitrary, discriminatory or in bad faith."

5. Other Issues

- An employee now has the explicit right to union representation by a steward in the event of a harassment situation (any kind of harassment, not just sexual harassment), complaint or investigation.

- The company has issued a policy directing managers that it is improper to make a regular shift shorter just to avoid paying for weekly overtime caused by working an extended shift.

- The union-management committee has added to its agenda an ongoing discussion of scheduling issues as well as skills training.

- Subject to ratification of this contract, four editorial managers are welcomed into the union in their current jobs.

- The junior copy editors who were laid off in March will have the option of extending their 12-month recall period to 18 months, or else accepting increased severance pay and giving up recall rights to a permanent job. Accordingly, the union's grievance will be withdrawn.