

Rejected by The NewsGuild-CWA 2025 Sector Conference

The NewsGuild-CWA Executive Council recommends against adopting Proposed Constitutional Amendments #1 and #2 submitted by the Ottawa Newspaper Guild.



OTTAWA NEWSPAPER GUILD
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June 4, 2025

The following proposed constitutional amendments are being submitted to the 2025 TNG-CWA Sector Conference by the Executive Committee of the Ottawa Newspaper Guild, Local 30205.

Moved by Gordon Holder, seconded by Bruce Campbell, that the ONG submit to the TNG-CWA sector conference these two motions regarding the Guild Mobilization and Defense Fund. CARRIED.

Proposed Amendment #1

NEW Article XVIII, Section 6 (f) - Given that CWA Canada is autonomous and does not wish to participate in the Guild Mobilization & Defense Fund (GMDF), Canadian Locals shall be exempt from paying into the fund.

Explanation:

- Exempting Canadian Locals from the GMDF brings the TNG-CWA Constitution in line with CWA Canada's right under the 2006 *"MOU Regarding CWA Operations in Canada"* to control its own governance and finances. Specifically, the MOU states: *"Arrangements for TNG-CWA Canada's expenses for its membership in TNG are to be agreed upon by the two groups as well as decisions concerning the position of TNG-CWA Canada with in the Sector, including any shared costs and any Canadian contributions to CWA beyond the MRF and Defense Fund."*

Proposed Amendment #2

NEW Article XVIII, Section 6 (g) - TNG-CWA will calculate Canadian contributions to the GMDF since inception, minus grants provided to Canadian Locals, and transfer that amount to CWA Canada within 90 days of passage of this amendment. If historical figures are not available to do the calculation, TNG-CWA will transfer 25% of the GMDF to CWA Canada, which conservatively estimates the historical percentage of Canadian membership in TNG-CWA.

Explanation:

- Over several decades, we estimate that Canadian Locals have contributed well over \$1 million to the GMDF while receiving less than 10% of that in grants. We never expected to receive in grants all the money we paid in, but 10% shows that the fund has not been a working for us. No group would continue paying into a fund that provided such a poor return. It is only fair that we get back most of the money we paid in to use in Canada for Canadian members - as is our right under the 2006 MOU.

These proposed amendments were approved/carried by the ONG executive committee June 4, 2025.

Executive Council Position Statement

These proposals call for amending TNG-CWA's Constitution to allow Guild locals in CWA Canada to withdraw from paying into the Guild Mobilization and Defense Fund ("GMDF") and a call for CWA Canada to be reimbursed for all Canadian contributions to the GMDF since inception. Currently under the Constitution, all Guild locals—including Guild locals in Canada—are required to make contributions into the GMDF as part of their per capita obligations.

The Executive Council found that the proposed constitutional changes submitted by the Ottawa Newspaper Guild are inherently anti-union because they seek to reduce our collective power by preventing one quarter of Guild members from participating in a fund set up decades ago to support Guild members across the continent in their fights.

Background

The GMDF was the Guild's strike fund prior to our 1997 merger into the CWA. The Fund continued after the merger to support strikes, mobilization efforts, campaigns and other expenses approved by TNG-CWA's Finance Committee, which is composed of members from the Executive Council.

The GMDF grows with a contribution of 0.058% average reporter top minimum, which was 73 cents in August 2025, per member per month, alongside any investment returns. The GMDF's role in recent years has been to support campaigns, actions and staff support for Guild locals across North America.

Recent GMDF projects assisted locals with funding for new staff to negotiate first contracts, a project that helped bring thousands of members under Guild contracts. It has and continues to support winning first contracts for thousands of members, organizing, communications initiatives, legislative fights, member education, arbitrations and legal services. It also provided funding for the Canadian Media Guild to conduct national leadership and staff training and to help beat back a decertification drive. And of course, it also provided financial assistance during the Halifax strike.

Guild Locals in Canada are part of CWA Canada, which operates as an autonomous entity within TNG-CWA and CWA.

Guild members across North America have the right to vote for and run in TNG-CWA elections for Sector Chairperson, President and Executive Vice President. The CWA

Canada President sits as a voting member on the Executive Council. Canadian Guild members have played pivotal roles in the Guild Sector and Election and Referendum Committee, that oversees Guild democratic elections and referenda.

CWA Canada's position within TNG-CWA, as well as its financial obligations to the Guild, are governed by TNG-CWA's Constitution, the Memorandum of Understanding Regarding CWA Operations in Canada ("2006 MOU"), and the financial agreements flowing from the 2006 MOU, as thereafter approved by the 2007 Sector Conference.

The 2006 MOU, sometimes known as the Canadian autonomy agreement, was signed by CWA, the Vice President of the Guild Sector and representatives of TNG-CWA Canada on July 7, 2006. The MOU provides that CWA Canada will function as an autonomous entity within The NewsGuild and CWA. That language is repeated in TNG-CWA's Constitution and the CWA Constitution. CWA Canada has a continuing constitutional obligation to "ensure that Canadian locals are in compliance with their constitutional requirements and obligations to TNG."

Several delegates at the 2006 Sector Conference complained about the lack of process and transparency in the negotiations that led to the 2006 MOU and directed the Executive Council to prepare an analysis and report "to be submitted to the 2007 Sector Conference for discussion and approval by the delegates."

Delegates adopted the Executive Council report at the 2007 Sector Conference, which included a "Financials" section that required that "TNG-CWA Canadian locals will pay the same TNG per capita as other TNG locals" with payments sent to Ottawa and listing out per capita payments paid by to the international union, including a "TNG Mobilization and Defense Fund payment."

CWA Canada's monthly contribution to the GMDF was made as part of the overall financial agreement flowing from the Canadian autonomy agreement and approved by the 2007 Sector Conference. The 2007 Sector Conference delegates adopted a series of constitutional amendments, endorsed by CWA Canada leadership, that both recognized Canadian autonomy and incorporated CWA Canada's financial obligations, including its obligation to the GMDF, into TNG-CWA's Constitution.

In the past several years the presidents of CWA Canada have asked the Executive Council and TNG officers to allow CWA Canada to stop paying into the GMDF, saying they don't get any money out of the GMDF. TNG officers repeatedly told CWA Canada's officers that

they can't simply pull out of the GMDF without Sector Conference action and that they, like any union officers, can put together a budget and request support from the GMDF. Only one request was made by CWA Canada in the last five years. That project was for \$50,000 to fund an education project for the Canadian Media Guild and was quickly approved. Because of the pandemic, the project took a few years to complete, but was fully paid out.

Conclusion

Allowing Canadian Guild locals to withdraw from the GMDF will undermine its long-term financial stability. Principles of unionism do not presume a “dollar for dollar” accounting of GMDF resources contributed by locals for the collective strength of all Guild members on both sides of the border.

It was not lost on the Executive Council that this proposal was submitted to a Sector Conference in Pittsburgh, where the Newspaper Guild of Pittsburgh has been on strike for more than two years and nine months. The GMDF has supported Pittsburgh strikers, paying for job actions, member organizers, occasional strike benefits, taxes, food, meeting expenses and a staffer to support them. These expenses are otherwise not covered by the CWA Members' Relief Fund.

Proposed Amendment #2 would require TNG to return to CWA Canada 25% of the GMDF balance, or refund all contributions made by Canadian locals back to the GMDF's inception, minus anything spent on Canadian locals. That request extends prior to the 2006 MOU. Either option is an enormous share of a fund that actively supports Guild locals facing challenges for which there is no other funding source.

Ottawa's proposed amendments incorrectly referenced articles in TNG-CWA's Constitution. Both refer to Article 18.6 when the current provisions are located at Article 18.5.

At its July 8 meeting, TNG-CWA's Executive Council voted to correct the constitutional references and refer the amendments to the Sector Conference with a recommendation against adoption. The Executive Council voted unanimously against adoption, but refers the proposal to the delegates because it believes it is important that the full Sector Conference debate this resolution before a decision is made.

The CWA Canada President was absent for this vote, and has skipped all 15 meetings of the Executive Council since the 2023 Sector Conference.

We believe it is also important for delegates to know that the CWA/SCA Canada Executive Committee passed a motion to study leaving The NewsGuild-CWA at their May 20, 2025 meeting.

Moved that CWA Canada establish a subcommittee to review options for moving forward with TNG concerns, including a process for leaving TNG while staying in CWA. The committee will make a recommendation to the executive committee. This review will include legal processes and advice. The committee will include up to 4 members of the executive, and is to report to the executive committee by July 7 2025.

TNG-CWA's Executive Council has not been officially notified of this motion or of the committee's formation.

The Canadian Media Guild passed a resolution at the May 2025 Convention that "any final decision on disaffiliation from TNG would require a referendum of the full CMG membership."

TNG-CWA's Executive Council is proud of our long history working with Guild members from Canada and the United States to build a robust international union. And the Executive Council believes that continued Canadian participation in the Guild is in the best interests of all Guild members because we are stronger together. It agrees no disaffiliation should be considered unless supported by a majority of the membership voting in referendum.

For the reasons set out above, The NewsGuild-CWA Executive Council recommends against adopting the proposed amendments.

Ottawa proposals with corrected Article references

Besides changing the incorrect Article references, these proposed amendments are identical to the originals submitted by the Ottawa Newspaper Guild.

Proposed Amendment #1

NEW Article XVIII, Section 5 (f) - Given that CWA Canada is autonomous and does not wish to participate in the Guild Mobilization & Defense Fund (GMDF), Canadian Locals shall be exempt from paying into the fund.

Explanation:

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Proposed Amendment #2

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