

# GLOSSARY OF LABOUR TERMS

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**Affiliate Union:** A union that is a member of a group of unions, such as the B.C. Federation of Labour.

**Agreement Collective:** A contract (*agreement* and *contract* are used interchangeably) between union(s) acting as bargaining agents, and employer(s) covering wages, hours, working conditions, fringe benefits, rights of workers and union, and procedures to be followed in settling disputes and grievances.

**American Federation of Labour:** Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)—A federation of craft and industrial unions, as well as unions of a mixed structure in the United States, the U.S. counterpart of the Canadian Labour Congress.

**Arbitration:** A method of settling disputes through the intervention of a “third party” whose decision is final and binding. The Union and the Employer are the first two “parties” to an agreement. An outside person such as a neutral arbitrator is called a “third party.” Most common is a single arbitrator, or a board consisting of a chairperson and a representative from each the Union and employer. Arbitration is often used to settle major grievances and to settle contract interpretation disputes. *Voluntary arbitration* is that agreed to by the parties without statutory compulsion. *Compulsory arbitration* is that imposed by law. Governments sometimes impose it to avoid a strike or to end one.

**Assessment:** Special charges levied by unions to meet particular financial needs, in addition to regular union dues.

**Bargaining Agent:** Union designated by the labour relations board as the exclusive representative of all employees in a bargaining unit for the purpose of collective bargaining. Individual employees are thereby prohibited from bargaining individually with the employer.

**Bargaining Unit:** Group of workers in a craft, department, plant, firm industry, or occupation, determined by a labour relations board or similar body as appropriate for representation by a union. Defines which employees are members of the union(s).

**Blue-Collar Workers:** Production and maintenance workers, as contrasted to office and professional personnel.

**Canadian Labour Congress (CLC):** Canada's national labour body representing over 60% of organized labour in the country.

**Certification:** Official designation by the labour relations board of a union as sole and exclusive bargaining agent following a proof of majority support among employees in a bargaining unit.

**Checkoff:** A clause in a collective agreement authorizing an employer to deduct union dues and sometimes other assessments, and forward those funds to the union.

**Closed Shop:** A provision in a collective agreement whereby all employees in a bargaining unit must be union members.

**Collective Agreement:** See Agreement.

**Collective Bargaining:** Method of determining wages, hours, and other conditions of employment through direct negotiations between the union (representing the membership “collective”) and the employer. Normally, the result of collective bargaining is a written contract that covers all employees in the bargaining unit.

**Company Union:** A group of employees frequently organized or inspired by management and usually dominated by the employer.

**Contracting Out:** An employer's having work performed by an outside contractor and not by a regular employee of the unit. Not to be confused with a subcontracting which is the practice of a contractor delegating part of the work to a subcontractor.

**Contract:** See *Agreement*.

**Contract Proposals:** Proposed changes to the collective agreement put forward by the union or the employer and subject to collective bargaining.

**Craft Union:** Also called *horizontal union*. Evolved from guilds, a trade union that organizes on the principle of limiting membership to some specific craft or skill (electricians, plumbers, etc.). In practice, many traditional craft unions now also enroll members outside the craft field, thereby resembling *industrial unions*.

**Decertification:** Withdrawal by a labour relations board of its certification of a union as exclusive bargaining representative, usually on the basis of a vote by employees.

**Discipline Clause:** A section of a collective bargaining agreement reserving to management the right to penalize employees for disobedience.

**Dues:** Payments by union members for the financial support of their union.

**Employment Standards Act:** Laws to cover wages, hours of work, and conditions for non-union workers.

**Federation of Labour:** A federation, chartered by the Canadian Labour Congress, grouping local unions and labour councils in a given province.

**Fringe Benefits:** Non-wage benefits, such as paid vacations, pensions, health and welfare provisions, life insurance, etc., the cost of which is borne in whole or in part by the employer. Also called perquisites, thus the term perks.

**Grievance:** Complaint against management by one or more employees, or a union, concerning alleged breach of the collective agreement or injustice. The last step of the procedure is usually arbitration. By law, every collective agreement must have a grievance procedure, to be used without disruption of work.

**Industrial Union:** Also called *vertical union*. A trade union that organizes on the principle of including all workers from one industry or workplace, regardless of their craft or whether they are skilled or unskilled. See *Craft Union*.

**Injunction:** A court order restraining an employer or union from committing or engaging in certain acts (e.g., picketing a particular location).

**International Labour Organization (ILO):** Tripartite world body representative of labour, management, and government; an agency of the United Nations. It disseminates labour information and sets minimum international labour standards, called *conventions*, offered to member nations for adoption. Its headquarters are in Geneva, Switzerland.

**International Union:** A union that has members in more than one country. Typically refers to a United States based union with members in Canada.

**Job Security:** A provision in a collective agreement protecting a worker's job as in the introduction of new methods or machines.

**Jurisdictional Dispute:** A dispute between two or more unions regarding which one will represent a group of employees or whose members will perform a certain kind of work.

**Labour Council:** An organization composed of locals of CLC-affiliated unions in a given community or district.

**Labour Relations Board:** A board established under labour relations legislation to administer labour law: certification of trade unions as bargaining agents, investigation of unfair labour practices, and other functions prescribed under the legislation.

**Layoff:** Temporary, prolonged, or final separation from employment as a result of lack of work.

**Leave of Absence:** Permitted absence for an employee for a limited period, ordinarily without pay.

**Local (Union):** The basic unit of union organization. Trade unions are usually divided into a number of locals for the purposes of local administration. The locals elect their own officers. They are usually responsible for the day-to-day administration of the collective agreements covering their members.

**Lockout:** A labour dispute in which management refuses work to employees or closes its establishment in order to force a settlement on its terms.

**Management Rights, Employer Rights:** The body of rights including hiring, scheduling of hours of operation, and contracting that management generally contends are not proper subjects for collective bargaining.

**Master Agreement:** A union contract setting basic standards for employers and unions covered by the agreement, who will negotiate further on local subjects.

**Mediation:** A means of settling labour disputes whereby the contending parties use a third person—called a *mediator*—as a neutral go-between.

**N. D. P.:** The New Democratic Party has been called the *political arm* of organized labour. Since its creation as the CCF in 1932, it has fought on behalf of workers for better pensions, labour laws, working conditions, medicare, unemployment insurance, human rights, and other progressive ideas in the legislatures across Canada. Many of the benefits that working people enjoy today can be credited to the policies, actions, and dedication of the NDP.

**National Union:** A union whose membership is confined to Canada.

**No-Strike Clause:** A contract clause restricting the freedom of workers to strike during the life of the agreement and requiring workers to settle their disputes through the grievance procedure. Compulsory in all provincial labour acts.

**Open Shop:** A shop in which union membership is not required as a condition of securing or retaining employment.

**Picketing:** Patrolling near employer's place of business by union members—*pickets*—to publicize the existence of a labour dispute, persuade workers to join or support a strike or join the union, discourage customers from buying or using employer goods or service, etc.

**Posting:** Requiring a display of job vacancies available for competition within the bargaining unit.

**Raiding:** An attempt by one union to induce members of another union to defect and join its ranks.

**Rand Formula:** Also called *agency shop*. A union security clause in a collective agreement stating that the employer agrees to deduct an amount equal to the union dues from all members of the bargaining unit, whether or not they are members of the union, for the duration of the collective agreement. See *Checkoff*.

**Recognition:** Employer acceptance of a union as the exclusive bargaining representative for the employees in the bargaining unit.

**Reopener:** A provision calling for reopening a collective agreement at a specified time prior to its expiration for bargaining, or for stated subjects such as a wage increase, pension, health and welfare.

**Seniority:** An employee's status relative to other employees for determining order of lay off, promotion, recall, transfer, vacations, etc. Seniority is based on length of service.

**Shop Steward:** A union official who represents a group of members and the union in union duties, grievance matters, and other employment conditions. Stewards are usually part of the work force they represent.

**Strike:** A refusal to work by employees in combination or in accordance with a common understanding for the purpose of compelling an employer to agree to terms or conditions of employment. Usually the last stage of collective bargaining when all other means have failed. Except in special cases, strikes are legal when a collective agreement has passed its end date.

- A *rotating strike* or *hit-and-run strike* is a strike organized in such a way that only part of the employees stop work at any given time, each group taking its turn.
- A *sympathy strike* is a strike by workers not directly involved in a labour dispute—an attempt to show labour solidarity and bring pressure on an employer in a labour dispute.
- A *wildcat strike* is a strike not authorized by the union—often in violation of a no-strike clause.

**Strikebreaker/Scab:** A person who continues to work or who accepts employment to replace workers who are on strike. By filling jobs, scabs may weaken or break a strike.

**Strike Vote:** Vote conducted among members of a union to determine whether or not to go on strike.

**Technological Change:** Technical progress in industrial methods such as the introduction of labour-saving machinery or new production techniques. Often results in workforce reductions.

**Trade Union:** Workers organized into a voluntary association or union to further their mutual interests with respect to wages, hours, working conditions, and other matters of interest to the workers.

**Trusteeship:** The taking over of the administration of a local union's affairs, including its treasury, by the parent body.

**Unfair Labour Practices:** Those employer or union activities that are classed as "unfair" by labour relations acts.

**Union Label; Bug:** A tag, an imprint, or a design affixed to a product to show it was made by union labour.

**Union Security:** Provisions in collective agreements designed to protect the institutional life of the union. See *Checkoff*, *Closed Shop*, *Maintenance of Membership*, *Rand Formula*, *Union Shop*, and *Modified Union Shop*.

**Voluntary Recognition:** An employer and a trade union may agree that the employer will recognize the trade union as the exclusive bargaining agent of the employees in a defined bargaining unit.

**Walkout:** A loose term for *strike*.

**White-Collar Workers:** Workers in offices and other non-production phases of industry.

**Work to Rule:** A practice where workers obey all laws and rules pertaining to their work, thereby effecting a slow-down; a refusal to perform duties that are not explicitly included in a job description.

**Working Conditions:** Conditions pertaining to the worker's job environment, such as hours of work, safety, paid holidays and vacations, rest period, free clothing or uniforms, possibilities and advancement. Many are included in the collective agreement and subject to collective bargaining.